Chapter 501 - 501 Honorific Name

501 Honorific Name

City of Exiles, Morora, doesn't exist? When Lumian perused the information Ludwig had "stolen," he couldn't shake the sensation that Morora was vivid and right before him. This stemmed from the fact that the scribe had meticulously chronicled every folklore and characteristic of the city. Even those who hadn't set foot there could conjure a mental image.

I read it so intently, feeling so nervous and afraid. Finally, you tell me, 'I'm sorry, I made all this up?' As Lumian grappled with the absurdity, his gaze reverted to the letter, eager to uncover Madam Magician's speculations.

The Major Arcana card holder teased, "Perhaps the individual who penned this Sealed Artifact information had already lost their sanity, conjuring the City of Exiles, Morora.

"Maybe it's a colossal prison nestled in the mountains, patrolled by guards. They provide supplies unattainable independently and remain cut off from the outside world.

"Perhaps Morora is genuinely an imagined City of Exiles, yet, in a peculiar way, it already exists…

"Don't dismiss the first and third conjectures as absurd or hyperbolic, making them implausible. Let me enlighten you; when dealing with Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts, numerous things defy common sense and intuition. Especially when we're talking about 0-01.

"Personally, I fancy the first conjecture. It emanates a fantastical beauty. A deranged Keeper jotting down information about a Sealed Artifact, filled with ramblings and delusions, and treating it as reality. But what about the truth? Where did it vanish to? Is it no longer in place?"

At the sight of this, Lumian felt an inexplicable chill, and his hair stood on end.

Madam Magician had expounded terrifying possibilities. Moreover, she had employed seemingly casual strokes, brisk descriptions, and a barrage of questions to cultivate an atmosphere of composure and distortion, pushing one's nerves to the brink. Prolonged contemplation of it could drive one to the brink of insanity.

Isn't this superior to the narrative prowess of most current bestselling authors in crafting horror tales? Lumian critiqued his Major Arcana card holder.

Shaking his head, he relegated 0-01 and the City of Exiles to the recesses of his mind.

He feared that dwelling on it might tip him into madness.

It wasn't out of the realm of possibility. Lumian hadn't slept since perusing the information. While he leveraged the 6 a.m. reset of his body every morning to alleviate fatigue, he occasionally heard indescribable and spine-chilling voices resembling calls from the depths of the mountains.

Phew… Lumian exhaled and resumed reading the letter.

"Alright, I won't terrify you any longer. In essence, until you truly confront 0-01, don't summarily dismiss any conjecture or potentiality.

"I've verified the auditory hallucinations you mentioned. It's a mild corruption induced by delving into 0-01's information. Some entities can induce corruption merely by knowing their names instead of their code names. Fortunately, your destiny is entwined with that long-named fellow. To some extent, it's akin to having the status of an Angel. Furthermore, you bear Mr. Fool's seal, the Blood Emperor's aura, and other high-level paraphernalia. That's why you only experienced a faint auditory hallucination and sensed the beckoning. You didn't suddenly descend into paranoia and extremism, harboring a desire to seek treasure in the mountains before vanishing one night."

Madam Magician revels in spinning horror stories. She insists on expanding concise explanations into potential scenarios for me… Lumian had been in correspondence with his Major Arcana card holder for quite some time, becoming well-acquainted with her choice of words and writing style.

"Let me remind you that you're akin to an Angel to some extent, yet you won't succumb to the corruption associated with higher Sequences. That's what sets you apart. It's why you can venture into many peculiar places. Hence, some entities seek to exploit this. Exercise caution and vigilance, continually scrutinizing yourself.

"By the way, Miss Justice and Judgment extend their gratitude. The revelation of 0-01 and Vermonda Sauron's whereabouts allowed them to fulfill a mission entrusted by Mr. Fool before his slumber. Hence, the rewards are particularly generous this time…

"Your concerns are valid. If you miss the initial trail, whether it's Bard, Mad Lady, or the traces left by other key members of April Fool's, it's more likely a trap than a clue. Of course, traps can yield certain information. As long as you can withstand the associated peril, you might uncover the architect of the trap.

"Remember, this is my name. It carries the power to conceal secrets from others.

The King of Yellow and Black is an alias for Mr. Fool… Cosmic Traveler and chronicling the world sounds amazing… Could she truly be the Angel of Stars

from the Bible? As Lumian committed it to memory, he witnessed the honorific name gradually fading, as if erased and consumed by the void.

At the conclusion of the letter, Madam Magician added: “The Minor Arcana, Knight of Swords, subordinate to Ma’am Hermit, journeyed to Feynapotter a few months ago for a certain matter. When you arrive there, should you require assistance or information, you can reach out to him.

“His messenger is:

“A peculiar creature wandering above the world, a half-fairy who fiddles with melodic strings, a messenger that belongs solely to the Knight of Swords.”

Half-fairy… Lumian had skimmed through information about such spirit world creatures, mainly to select a suitable contract partner. He hadn’t delved into the details, making it challenging to recall.

Simultaneously, he noted that the Knight of Swords’s messenger incantation deviated from the conventional format. Perhaps there was concern that foes could decipher the correct three-line description and summon the messenger to target him.

Regardless, with the limiting phrase “a messenger that belongs solely to the Knight of Swords,” the second sentence didn’t necessarily have to depict a creature friendly to humans. However, since it could serve as the messenger of the Knight of Swords, it could tacitly be considered as friendly to humans.

Lumian reread Madam Magician’s letter from start to finish, mindful not to overlook any crucial information embedded in her cryptic statements.

Suddenly, a knock echoed on the bedroom door.

Lumian glanced up, and the door creaked open. Ludwig stuck his chubby head out and, in a daze, uttered, “I’m hungry. It’s time for you to cook.”

“Didn’t you just eat plenty of cake and crackers?” Lumian’s lips twitched.

Ludwig replied seriously, “That’s dessert, not the main course.”

Subtly, he licked his lips.

“Moreover, your culinary skills are quite impressive, and those dishes are quite unique. With a chef around, I don’t want to settle for raw beef, hard bread, and freshly bought potatoes.”

The boy’s expression turned pleading.

Lumian scoffed.

“Why don’t you do it yourself?”

“I can only cook by myself after I recover a little,” Ludwig replied subconsciously before changing his tone. “I’m still a child. You’re actually asking me to cook in the kitchen? Aren’t you afraid that I’ll be injured by a knife or burned?”

I’m just afraid you’ll eat the knife… What does it mean to cook after recovering a little? Is Chef a higher rank than your current Sequence’s strength? Can’t you cook if you’re not a chef? Lumian observed Ludwig leaning against the door frame, looking at him with expectant brown eyes, and suddenly found the scene familiar.

In the past, he had begged his sister Aurore in the same way.

Lumian sighed and stood up.

“I’m only responsible for three meals. The rest of the time, rely on dessert, bread, and cold dishes. Don’t bother me.”

As he spoke, he left the bedroom and entered the kitchen.

After pan-frying a steak, Lumian picked it up and casually tossed it out.

Ludwig deftly caught it, tore it in a few bites, and stuffed it down his abdomen.

Observing this, Lumian chuckled inwardly, feeling that this fellow was even more absurd than he had been back then.

…

In Underground Trier, within a quarry cave.

Lumian stood before the altar, encircled by the recently dismantled wall of spirituality.

He had completed the Contractee summoning ritual and gained two new contracted abilities. Now, he awaited Franca and the others to witness who could successfully gain a messenger.

One of these abilities was Shadow Transformation. It allowed Lumian to authentically morph into a shadow, merging with it to conceal himself and move stealthily—a skill he currently lacked.

While such abilities existed in the mystical knowledge of Contractees, Lumian opted to acquire them from the spirit world creature information provided by Madam Magician. This prevented the bestowed of Inevitability from discerning the negative effects he might endure.

Ultimately, Lumian contracted a spirit world creature known as Long Shadow. He sacrificed six servings of fresh cow and sheep meat in exchange for this ability, making him more susceptible to sunlight than ordinary humans.

This wasn’t as severe as the aversion Vampires had to sunlight. Lumian could endure it with his Ascetic endurance.

Another ability he had acquired was the Bottle of Fiction. He found the unique and practical ability demonstrated by the padre intriguing. It could effectively screen an enemy, creating a concealed space where the other party couldn’t escape and could only exit through the bottle’s opening; traps could be added.

Since no spirit world creature could provide this ability, Lumian summoned the creature called the Fantasy Face and completed the contract with a bottle of blood with strong spirituality.

The blood needed to come from a Beyonder above Sequence 7 or a corresponding Beyonder creature. Lumian, naturally, wouldn’t use his own blood, as sacrificing it to the Fantasy Face could gradually transform him into a monster. Instead, he used the blood Madam Magician extracted from Gardner Martin’s corpse—one of the supplementary ingredients for a Reaper. It was substantial, and there was plenty.

The corresponding downside was a trace of greed.

Before long, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony arrived at the quarry cave, one after another.

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Chapter 502 - 502 Messenger Ritual

502 Messenger Ritual

Anthony stared at the altar, the flickering candlelight casting shadows on his face. He voiced his concerns and uncertainties about having their own messenger.

His knowledge of mysticism hinted that messengers were a rare occurrence. Only Beyonders of specific pathways at a certain Sequence or high-level Beyonders with godhood possessed these special contracted creatures, accessible at any time and summoned by others.

Franca, grinning, reassured him, “Other Beyonders might not cut it, but we still have a chance.

“There are three prerequisites for possessing a messenger. First, you need to understand spirit world creatures, knowing which ones can be used as messengers. You must grasp their characteristics and devise incantations for precise summoning. Second, the spirit world creature must be willing to respond to the summoning and not reject signing a contract to become your messenger. Third, you need a unique undead contract and a deity to bear witness, restraining both parties and clarifying their responsibilities.

“See, there aren’t any restrictions on pathways and Sequences among these three. There are only hidden restrictions, but there are ways to bypass them.

“For ordinary Beyonders, the first requirement is the toughest. Usually, they lack a deep understanding of spirit world creatures. Summoning one might make them tremble with fear, afraid the incantation could lead to a monster that could harm their family. With time, they might rely on their predecessors’ experiences to accumulate reliable summoning incantations, but most have nothing to do with a messenger.

“We’re different. As members of the Tarot Club, we have Madam Magician, an expert in spirit world creatures. Ciel has a pile of information on them. Madam Magician selected 30 spirit world creatures suitable for being a messenger, some with a desire to serve as a Mid-Sequence Beyonder’s messenger. This allows us to skip the greatest obstacle.

“Otherwise, consider the speed at which spirit world creatures traverse. Some messengers can cover the distance from southern Intis to Trier in just a few minutes. Others take ten minutes to half an hour, while some may take half a day or even a full day. Without knowledge, signing a messenger that takes half a year or one year to cover such a distance is pointless.”

“My name isn’t Ciel Dubois anymore,” Lumian reminded Franca after she finished explaining a portion of the knowledge to Anthony and Jenna, who were novices in the mysticism world.

Franca let out a hollow laugh.

“Isn’t it just a habit of the mouth? When I first met you, your name was Ciel. I’ve been calling you that for months.”

She continued, “The second prerequisite is that we have a way to bypass it. Beyonders of pathways like Corpse Collector, affiliated with the undead and other creatures in the spirit world, can make them willing to be summoned. Then, it’s possible to sign a messenger contract. At the Sequence of Spirit Guide, they can even semi-compulsively turn a target they fancy into their messenger. Without such specialties, one can often only rely on their status to suppress and intimidate them.

“As for us, we follow Mr. Fool. You’ve all heard the Church’s bible, so you should know that Mr. Fool is the great ruler who controls the spirit world. Strictly speaking, those spirit world creatures are under his control. As members of the Tarot Club, summoning spirit world creatures and signing a messenger contract with them will definitely be much easier. In particular, Lumian here has Mr. Fool’s power. Have you ever seen him fail in summoning spirit world creatures? At most, it’s vague. What comes isn’t what he wants.

“The third prerequisite is that Madam Magician has already given Lumian a special undead contract, specially prepared for messengers. The witness should be Death, but they can be replaced by an Angel from the Underworld or the undead domain. And there’s an Angel of Death by Mr. Fool’s throne. He’s the Consul of the Underworld!

“Actually, I don’t think it’s a problem to use Mr. Fool’s honorific name directly. Would spirit world creatures not obey the orders of the great ruler who controls the spirit world?”

The information from Madam Magician contained a four-line description targeting the Underworld, suitable as a witness.

Jenna and Anthony absorbed the mysticism knowledge attentively, realizing its value in explaining many problems in ordinary summoning rituals.

Once Franca had concluded her instructional role, Lumian produced a carefully selected stack of information about spirit world creatures and directed his attention to Jenna.

“You first.”

Jenna, pointing at herself in confusion and surprise, asked, “Me?”

Lumian let out a chuckle.

“My chances of success should be about the same as yours, but I have a lot of messy things on me. I’m afraid it’ll cause an anomaly and ruin the rest of tonight’s attempts, so I’ll be the last.”

Jenna considered Lumian’s explanation and agreed.

Muttering under her breath, she took the document and flipped to the page she had chosen earlier.

It recorded a spirit world creature she was relatively familiar with: “Rabbit of Knowledge.”

However, this wasn’t an ordinary Rabbit of Knowledge; it had absorbed some specific knowledge and undergone a special mutation to become suitable as a messenger.

Jenna had a positive impression of the Rabbit of Knowledge. She found it friendly and willing to help humans, making it her preferred choice from the beginning.

Additionally, its silly appearance added to its charm.

Retrieving the page of information, Jenna entered the altar. Recalling Franca’s teachings and the mystical knowledge from the Witch potion, she swiftly sanctified the ritual silver dagger and created a wall of spirituality.

Having completed all the preparations, Jenna took two steps back, focused on the candle flame, and uttered a concise and forceful word in ancient Hermes.

“I!”

Then, she switched to Hermes.

“I summon in my name:

“Rabbit-shaped spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a friendly creature that can be communicated with, a runner who pursues knowledge.”

In this modified incantation, the original “weakling” was replaced with “runner” to specifically denote the special Rabbit of Knowledge.

The candle flame abruptly shifted to a dark green hue, expanding to the size of a human head.

A translucent creature resembling a rabbit emerged from the dark-green candle flame.

Unlike other Rabbits of Knowledge, its eyes emitted a wise glint, and it held a blurry book with an orange-red cover in its hand.

Its legs were powerful, indicating its proficiency in running.

Jenna couldn't contain her joy at successfully summoning it on her first attempt.

Slightly perturbed, she addressed the creature in ancient Hermes, "Are you willing to become my messenger?"

The mutated Rabbit of Knowledge glanced at Jenna and asked in Intisian, "Have you ever called my kind fools or idiots before?"

"No," Jenna replied sincerely. "I curse occasionally, but it's not directed at anyone. It's just an expression of my emotions."

Occasionally? Lumian mocked Jenna inwardly.

However, this might have been more of a formality, as the answer of not having engaged in name-calling was sufficient. Whether it was entirely true or not seemed inconsequential.

The rabbit nodded and said, "You have to pay me. Every time you summon me, you have to give me a book or knowledge of equal value. You can give it to me directly or burden the person who's writing to you."

It agreed just like that? Having name-called it in the past, I can't summon this rabbit as a messenger? Well, I can't summon it now either. There should only be one special Rabbit of Knowledge that has evolved to be capable of being a messenger… Lumian knew it was generally easy to deal with, but he didn't expect it to be so amiable.

Jenna glanced at the information placed at the edge of the altar, noticing a notification: "The knowledge you feed the Rabbit of Knowledge determines what it will become in the future."

Will reading more postman-related books improve its awareness and abilities as a messenger? Jenna wondered to herself as she replied, "No problem. Let's sign a contract."

Following the template provided by Madam Magician, she used the dark-red fountain pen on the altar to swiftly write a contract on the yellowish-brown goatskin, outlining the agreed compensation.

The contract was composed in ancient Hermes, with every word seeming to resonate with the forces of nature and the spirit world. Jenna had utilized her usual studies and the knowledge from the Witch potion to quickly grasp this Beyonder language.

In addition to the contract, Jenna penned a description of the mysticism related to the Underworld.

"The home of all death, the hell hidden deep within the spirit world, the witness of the decay of all living things, one that solely belongs to the kingdom of Death."

As she wrote, the ancient Hermes words burned with dark-green flames, including the original ones.

Remembering Lumian's earlier advice, Jenna deliberately included a clause fixing the summoning incantation as "Rabbit-shaped spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a runner who pursues knowledge, a messenger that belongs solely to the Seven of Cups."

Still cautious about revealing her real name, Jenna refrained from using it. She worried that someone familiar with her messenger summoning incantation might uncover her true identity, potentially implicating her brother Julien in the future.

After scanning the contract and confirming its accuracy, Jenna signed her code name.

The goatskin floated up and flew toward the mutated Rabbit of Knowledge.

Picking up another fountain pen, the Rabbit of Knowledge wrote its name: "Chasel Sávio."

"You have a name?" Lumian was a little surprised.

He was also within the wall of spirituality.

"I named it myself after reading a book. It's my name now," replied Rabbit Chasel as the ghastly green flames on the goatskin merged, incinerating the contract into ashes and transforming it into an invisible force.

Jenna breathed a sigh of relief and engaged in a brief conversation with Rabbit Chasel before concluding, "I! I end this summoning in my name."

Rabbit Chasel returned to the spirit world, and Franca eagerly watched as the wall of spirituality dissipated before stepping into the altar.

Jenna's ease had filled her with confidence.

However, she faced a shameful failure.

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Chapter 503 - 503 Penitent

503 Penitent

Franca attempted summoning five different spirit world creatures. Despite her successful summonings, none of the spirit world creatures were willing to sign a contract and become her messenger.

The repeated failures struck her hard, and her disappointment and frustration were evident from her blank expression.

Nevertheless, she didn't let her emotions dictate her actions. Undeterred, she proceeded to summon the remaining 24 spirit world creatures.

The situation was becoming increasingly clear—success, if achievable, would happen in the first few attempts!

Jenna glanced at the disappointed Franca.

"Give it a try when your Sequence is higher."

Franca grumbled, "When I reach a higher Sequence, I might use a mirror and the mirror world to send messages. Why would I need a messenger? Why aren't there any spirit world creatures tempted by a Demoness's charm and willing to become a messenger?"

Lumian let out a chuckle.

"I've seen something similar in the information about spirit world creatures. Would you like to give it a try?"

Despite her reluctance to admit defeat, Franca remained pragmatic. She cursed, "Forget it, forget it. Such spirit world creatures are definitely dangerous. All they can think about is dragging a Demoness into the spirit world. Even delivering a letter will help me turn my friend into an enemy."

Seeing that she had calmed down, Anthony Reid, a fellow novice in ritualistic magic, made his attempt.

Like Franca, he too faced a series of challenges. Five attempts were made, with two summoning failures and three unsuccessful contract formations.

"Looks like I can't have a messenger for the time being," Anthony sighed with a bitter smile.

Franca's emotions eased significantly.

She wasn't alone in facing difficulties.

"Which one do you want to summon?" she asked Lumian curiously.

"The coolest one." Lumian, maintaining an air of nonchalance, sanctified the ritual silver dagger and recreated the spiritual barrier.

Focusing on the burning candle flames, he took steps back, alternating between ancient Hermes and Hermes.

"I!

"I summon in my name:

"A creature wandering above the world, the penitent who awakens from the flames of pain, a friendly person corrupted by darkness."

This summoning incantation, unique information from Madam Magician, deviated from the norm. It wasn't just a spirit but a creature wandering above the world. The latter descriptions combined encounters and characteristics, adding an intriguing layer to the summoning.

Lumian found the temperament and style of this particular creature impressive and decided to make it his first attempt. He sought a messenger capable of delivering a letter and traversing the spirit world, indifferent to other considerations. Why not choose the coolest one?

As the incantation echoed, the candle flame expanded, acquiring a dark-green hue bordering on black.

With each intensifying flicker, a figure materialized.

It was a tall, human-like being dressed in deep-black robes reminiscent of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church clergy.

However, his exposed face and limbs bore the marks of prolonged incineration, leaving only bones and charred flesh. Empty eye sockets glowed with dark flames, while strange, viscous black flames lingered, causing perpetual pain to the spirit.

Lumian gazed at the Penitent and asked in ancient Hermes, "Are you willing to become my messenger?"

Responding in ancient Feysac, the source of several Northern Continent languages, the Penitent offered a condition,

"If you're not concerned about being implicated by me and slowly slipping into the darkness, I can help you deliver letters."

No compensation, but there's latent danger? Since Madam Magician provided the Penitent's information, it means I can bear it… Lumian, who had too much mysticism "debt" to worry about, smiled and said,

"That depends on whether you and darkness can win the tug-of-war. No problem. I was mentally prepared for this before summoning you."

This time, he switched to ancient Feysac to communicate with the other party. After all, it was quite troublesome to use ancient Hermes, which could stir the power of nature, to say so much.

Soon, he drafted the contract and penned the four-line mysticism description representing the Underworld's representative as witness.

Illuminated by ancient Hermes words engulfed in ghastly green flames, Lumian fixed the summoning incantation to: "A creature wandering above the world, the penitent who awakens from the flames of pain, a messenger that belongs solely to Lumian Lee."

Lumian didn't adopt a code name like Jenna and the Knight of Swords. After all, those who knew about his messenger might not know that he was a Minor Arcana card holder of the Tarot Club. This was the self-cultivation of a veteran spy, and it didn't matter if Lumian Lee's name and corresponding background were known.

With his name penned down, Lumian witnessed the yellowish-brown goatskin fly towards the black-robed Penitent.

The Penitent signed his name: Baynfel.

The ghastly green flames intertwined, consuming the contract and seamlessly merging with the spirit world.

Curious about his new messenger, Lumian queried Penitent Baynfel, "What are you penitent about?"

However, Baynfel remained silent, and a viscous black flame descended from his body, disappearing into the soil.

Despite Lumian's persistent questioning, Baynfel kept his silence.

Lumian chuckled and remarked, "Very good. All hairdressers should learn from you," before concluding the summoning.

After he dismantled the wall of spirituality, Franca looked at him with a resentful expression.

"You succeeded on the first try?"

"I succeeded on the first try." Lumian lacked any evident joy, as if he was talking about something ordinary.

Perplexed and unable to let go of her own failures, Franca questioned, “Why? Why aren’t Anthony and I popular with the spirit world creatures? Why?”

It had to be said that the Demoness of Pleasure was quite charming. Seeing Franca like this, Ascetic Lumian wanted to walk up to her, raise his right hand, and flick her forehead.

It made him want to bully her!

He pondered for a moment.

“I roughly understand the reason. Being a Minor Arcana card holder of the Tarot Club increases our chances of successfully summoning special spirit world creatures. Even a Psychiatrist like Anthony succeeded several times during his first ritualistic magic.

“However, to gain their favor or obedience, you need a higher level, a special pathway, or something related to Mr. Fool. For example, Jenna’s lucky gold coin and Mr. Fool’s power on me.”

A sudden realization struck Lumian.

If that’s the reason, does the Knight of Swords, who also possesses a messenger, have something similar?

“I see!” Franca, buoyed by this insight, regained confidence.

It wasn’t that there was a problem with her; she simply lacked a “prop.”

She then looked at Jenna, contemplating whether to borrow the lucky gold coin to complete the messenger contract.

Franca eventually dismissed the idea. There was a significant mysticism difference between “ownership” and “loaning.” She was afraid that Jenna wouldn’t be able to handle it if she were to give it and take it back in the future without a unique opportunity.

Phew… Franca exhaled and was about to inquire when Lumian planned to leave Trier and how, when she noticed her companion’s inexplicable silence and a hint of dejection.

“What’s the matter?” Franca inquired, concerned.

“Nothing.” Lumian shook his head.

He suddenly remembered that Aurore had once yearned for a messenger.

Anthony glanced at Lumian, but no words were exchanged. Jenna brought up the Purifiers’ Deacon Angoulême’s proposal to purchase the Pride Armor, prompting Lumian to fall into a brief silence before chuckling.

“I’ll decide after some time.”

Despite recognizing the danger of the Pride Armor, Lumian acknowledged its formidable power. It could pose a threat to all Beyonders below the demigod level. If wearing it was the key to defeating Loki and other key members of April Fool’s, Lumian wouldn’t hesitate to use it, prepared to face the consequences.

Lumian wouldn’t give up on the Sealed Artifact just because it was dangerous, until he eliminated all those scoundrels or until he was too strong for Pride Armor.

“Alright,” Franca inquired, “Are you leaving Trier tomorrow? Will you take a boat, a steam locomotive, or seek the spirit world’s coordinates from Madam Magician and ‘teleport’ there?”

Lumian chuckled.

“All of them are possible. I’ll decide tomorrow. Let’s see what fate has in mind.”

Franca muttered, “When did you learn to act all mysterious…”

…

After bidding farewell to his three companions, Lumian adorned the silver Lie earring and subtly altered his hair color and appearance. Making his way down Avenue du Marché into Rue Anarchie, he arrived at Auberge du Coq Doré’s underground bar.

Seemingly unaffected by the previous night’s catastrophe, the bar retained its lively atmosphere. Regular patrons occupied their usual spots—some singing loudly, others dancing around small round tables, and a few engaged in gambling with alcohol as stakes.

Charlie, now in a black coat, stood at a small round table, enthusiastically exclaiming, “You might not know this, but Ciel Dubois and I are friends. We’ve been through life and death together! Look, look, his bounty has been updated to 60,000 verl d’or! What a substantial sum!”

You’re quite proud of me… Lumian scoffed and settled at the bar, ordering a glass of absinthe.

In the midst of the commotion, he silently listened, savoring the bitter liquor.

Pavard Neeson, the proprietor wiping glasses, noticed the new face and smilingly inquired, “Have you just arrived in the market district?”

“Yes,” Lumian responded in a deep voice.

Pavard Neeson said gently, “You seem to have a story.”

Lumian sighed, taking a sip of the dreamy La Fée Verte. With a self-deprecating smile, he said, “I’m a nobody…”

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Chapter 504 - 504 “Breakup”

504 “Breakup”

“In an instant, I found myself with no alternative but to depart. Staying put was not an option. Besides, lingering too long might jeopardize my friend and jeopardize the fortune he had tirelessly amassed.

Lumian raised the emerald-green absinthe to his lips once more.

Pavard Neeson, the proprietor of the bar, gently placed his glass on the counter and let out a sigh.

“That’s truly unfortunate.”

A sly grin played on Lumian’s lips.

“Alright, I’ve wrapped up my tale. How about a complimentary drink on the house?”

Pavard, his ponytail giving him a somewhat artistic appearance, was momentarily taken aback.

…

Minutes before the stroke of midnight, Charlie, clad in a black coat, exited the basement bar of Auberge du Coq Doré and retraced his steps to his rented apartment.

Under the gentle autumn night sky, a soothing breeze played, neither bone-chilling nor overly brisk. It seemed to cleanse both body and mind with each inhale. Charlie couldn’t resist taking a deep breath.

“Dogsh*t, which drunkard peed all over the place again?” The foul odor in the air soured Charlie’s mood.

At that very moment, a silhouette emerged from the shadows up ahead.

The figure boasted golden-black hair, piercing blue eyes, and a strikingly handsome face—none other than Ciel Dubois.

Haven’t you left Trier? Charlie’s heart surged with joy, ready to inquire further.

But almost instantly, he caught sight of the dark expression on Ciel’s face, as if a tempest brewed within his eyes.

Charlie jumped in fright, his thoughts racing. Instinctively, he said, “I-I was going to let you know…”

Before he could finish, Lumian materialized before him, his right fist meeting Charlie’s face with a solid impact.

The force sent golden specks dancing in Charlie’s vision. He teetered backward, struggling to maintain his balance.

Lumian’s countenance darkened as he spoke, “Considering our past friendship, I won’t kill you this time.”

With that, he pivoted in his dark jacket and strode towards a dimly lit alley, away from the glow of street lamps.

Clutching his throbbing face, Charlie watched Ciel vanish into the shadows. Anxious and incensed, he blurted out, “But I couldn’t locate you! How was I supposed to inform you that you’re wanted?”

Lumian offered no response, disappearing into the alley.

Rooted to the spot, Charlie couldn’t suppress his curses.

Frustration and resentment welled up within him.

Why did he suddenly become so unreasonable?

It’s not my fault you’re wanted. I’ve done my utmost to help!

I’m just a clerk; there’s a limit to what I can accomplish!

…

The next morning, Charlie had just settled into his subterranean office at église Saint-Robert, armed with a meatloaf. Before he could even start brewing a cup of coffee, he spotted Angoulême, the deacon clad in a brown double-breasted coat, heading his way.

“Morning, Deacon,” Charlie exclaimed, rising to his feet and greeting him with eager deference.

Angoulême glanced at the bruises on his left cheek.

“What happened? Did you get into a scuffle?”

“Oh, no, not at all! I, uh, collided—with a statue!” Charlie suddenly grew jittery and waved his hand dismissively. “It might sound unbelievable, but those lunatics get wild when they’re drunk. Some rant about toppling the government, others believe their vomit is gourmet cuisine, and a few decide to relocate hefty statues to random corners. I accidentally bumped into one.”

Angoulême maintained a steady gaze on the clerk and spoke with measured calmness,

“Your lies lack finesse. Do you recall the clause in the contract about not concealing crucial information?”

Charlie’s expression stiffened, his lips faltering before he stammered, “I-it’s Ciel. Ciel Dubois attacked me. Perhaps he’s resentful because I didn’t notify him beforehand about being wanted by us.”

Angoulême listened in silence. After a brief pause, he remarked, “Very well. That’s more like what a competent Purifier clerk should be. Where did you encounter him?”

“Right outside Auberge du Coq Doré, just past the first alley leading to Avenue du Marché,” Charlie responded, a blend of nervousness and concern coloring his voice.

Angoulême delved into further details and said to Charlie, “Given that Ciel Dubois’s true circumstances surpassed our expectations, we scrutinized all the files associated with him. It came to light that you share a close bond with him and that he was implicated in Susanna Mattise’s Beyonder case. Upon including him in that matter, it became apparent that you concealed numerous details.”

Charlie, upon hearing the deacon’s words, stiffened, beads of cold sweat forming on his forehead.

“I-I…” He faltered, unable to find words, as if the specter of his impending doom loomed large.

At that moment, Angoulême took the initiative to ask, “Did Ciel force you to hide these details?”

“No, it wasn’t coercion,” Charlie responded instinctively, quickly adding, “He requested it.”

“As expected, a request,” Angoulême nodded thoughtfully and probed into every nuance of the Susanna Mattise incident.

With his psychological defenses stripped away, Charlie laid bare every detail to the Purifier deacon.

Upon concluding his account, Angoulême spoke with gravity, “For someone in your position as a Purifier clerk, concealing vital case details would typically lead to immediate dismissal, if not imprisonment…”

Though Charlie had braced himself for such a repercussion, the actual words felt like a blow to the head. His body swayed, teetering on the brink of imbalance.

Before he could mount a plea, Angoulême shifted the conversation.

“However, your recent performance has been commendable. You’ve shown diligence, dedication, and commitment to your studies. Moreover, it appears you haven’t leaked information to Ciel, caushing his resentment towards you.

“As the deacon of the market district’s Inquisition, I’m inclined not to cast aside someone who has earnestly climbed out of the abyss and crush their last hope. Given your clean record after becoming a Purifier clerk and the authenticity of the Susanna Mattise incident, I’m offering you another chance. I can’t just push you out and wait for Ciel to kill you or the Mother Tree of Desire’s bestowed to find you again, can I?

“You’ll be terminated, but you can intern here. Your salary will revert to the intern level for six months. If you excel and avoid errors during this period, you may be rehired. Otherwise, you’ll be asked to leave immediately.

“In simpler terms, your punishment is a six-month probation.”

Charlie, upon hearing these words, felt a surge of relief, as if he had plummeted into hell only to be yanked back into heaven.

In a frenzy of gratitude, he slumped back into his seat, drained of strength.

As Angoulême departed, Charlie’s mind reeled, scenes flashing before his eyes.

After a few seconds, he raised his right hand and delivered a self-inflicted slap.

Muttering in frustration and regret, he reflected,

“To think, last night at the bar, I boasted about Ciel and me being friends who had faced life and death together…”

…

Shortly after returning to his office, Angoulême received a telegram.

It originated from Saint Vièvе Cathedral’s Plessy Descartes, overseeing the Trier diocese.

The Cardinal summoned Angoulême to Saint Vièvе Cathedral for a discussion.

Saint Vièvе Cathedral.

Ascending a dazzling staircase to an area near the dome, a small room awaited. It stood as one of the places in Trier closest to the sun.

Clad in a white robe adorned with golden threads, Cardinal Plessy spent his days here, bathed in holy light.

An elderly man with high cheekbones and grizzled blond hair, his demeanor lacked sternness, yet a radiant glow made direct eye contact impossible, rendering

the room eerily devoid of shadows.

“While you faced challenges during the recent catastrophe due to unforeseen events and intel disruptions, your ability to grasp crucial information and manage subsequent arrangements was noteworthy. We haven’t overlooked your performance in the market district over the past year,” Plessy commended amicably.

“Praise the Sun!” Angoulême proclaimed, extending his arms in acknowledgment of the Lord’s glory.

Plessy’s satisfaction deepened.

“In light of the current circumstances and the foreseeable future, we intend to establish three Purifier teams directly under the Trier diocese. This will provide flexibility in handling various Beyonder incidents.”

At this point, the Cardinal offered a rare smile.

“You’ve been swamped with work for the past six months. Privately, you’ve voiced concerns about lacking leisure time. Do not blame yourself; it’s a common human experience. As a deacon in the Trier diocese, you should find more leisure time. Your role will involve addressing cases beyond the capacity or timeframe of the Purifiers in the districts.

“Of course, this also entails risk. You must comprehend this clearly.

“Fran?ois, Sequence 4 marks a qualitative transformation. Many within the Inquisition are aspiring to become Saints. If you wish to surpass them, you must make remarkable contributions. The first step is to become a deacon of a small team under a large diocese. The second step involves amassing contributions and wielding a Holy Artifact. The third step is to await an opportune moment.

“Do you aspire to be a deacon? I respect your desires.”

Flexibility… Addressing cases beyond the reach of Purifiers in various districts… I should typically have considerable freedom. How could there be so many significant matters… I don’t know if Gandalf’s apocalyptic prophecy holds true, but there’s no harm in self-improvement… Angoulême pondered briefly and responded, “Your Eminence, thy will be done.”

Plessy smiled and said, “As a deacon, you’ll be tasked with selecting team members.”

“Yes, Your Eminence.” Angoulême extended his arms once more, praising the sun.

Upon returning to the underground confines of église Saint-Robert, he summoned the mixed-blood Imre to his office, apprising his subordinate of the Trier diocese team.

“Are you willing to follow me?” Angoulême inquired.

Imre smiled and replied, “Does this mean I can advance my Sequence and earn a higher salary? I have no issue with that!”

After agreeing, the mixed-blood inquired, “Who should we choose next?”

Angoulême fell into silence for over ten seconds before stating, “Don’t consider individuals like Valentine, those with a wife and children. Approach those who are single.

“A team under direct command is both an honor and a risk.”

Angoulême released a soft sigh and added, “Which Purifier with a happy family wouldn’t want to witness their child grow and spend more time with their spouse? Let the single individuals among us bear this burden.”

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Chapter 505 - 505 Departure

505 Departure

Having apprehended everyone deserving of it in the market district and putting those who hadn't been arrested on the wanted list, Angoulême found a rare moment of leisure. He shifted his focus to selecting members for the Trier diocese team.

He swiftly concluded his work and returned to his rented apartment in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, promptly falling asleep.

Angoulême slept until the early hours of the morning, awakened by the growling of his stomach. He nibbled on a piece of white bread, complemented by his stockpiled jerky, butter, and red wine.

Observing the unwashed cutlery on the coffee table, he contentedly seated himself in front of the miniaturized analyzer and switched on the radio transceiver.

During this time, the telegraph group was most active.

After sending a telegram to announce his presence, Angoulême pulled over a pillow, placing it behind him as he leaned comfortably against the wall.

Soon, amidst the clicking sounds, the analyzer, powered by numerous components, spat out a telegram.

Angoulême's forehead twitched at the sight of the telegram's signature: Hidden Blade.

He picked up the telegram and quickly scanned its contents.

"007, you're finally here. I have something to tell you!

"I've just received news that the Mirror People we mentioned have been infiltrating Trier over the past decade, replacing the original ones. Countless Trier citizens are already Mirror People, and no one knows their ultimate goals, but it can't be anything good.

"I'm investigating these Mirror People. I'll give you new clues at any moment. Keep an eye out for such matters in advance."

After reading it, Angoulême took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

…

The following morning, Lumian sat in a four-wheeled, four-seater rental carriage. Ludwig, clad in a caramel coat and carrying a red school bag, occupied the seat beside him. On the opposite side sat Lugano Toscano, with thick eyebrows and large eyes, emanating a distinct protagonist aura.

Glancing out the window at Avenue du Marché, Lumian noticed little deviation from the usual scene.

Street vendors, public carriages, and rental carriages bustled about. The Suhit steam locomotive station welcomed numerous foreigners, waiters actively seeking customers, cafés doubling as beer houses, inexpensive restaurants, and card rooms, along with clerks and workers in a hurry.

While seemingly unchanged, subtle shifts had occurred. “Rat” Christo had fled, “Giant” Simon was apprehended, and Baron Brignais was nowhere to be found. He didn’t even commission information brokers to seek out his smuggled godson.

The Savoie Mob, once dominant, faced total annihilation, setting the market district on the brink of new mob conflicts.

The dark-brown rental carriage, marked with a yellow plate, gradually departed from the lively and somewhat chaotic surroundings.

“Should we travel by boat to Feynapotter, or perhaps get false identities and take the southbound steam locomotive to explore Riston Province first?”

“It’s in the hands of fate,” Lumian replied with a smile.

Producing three post-it notes, he scribbled various options with the black fountain pen he carried: “Boat,” “steam locomotive,” and “direct travel.”

Crumpling the notes into balls, he deftly shuffled their positions, presenting a dazzling display of sleight of hand.

“Your turn. Let’s see what fate has in store.” Lumian extended his right hand to Lugano.

Isn’t this too arbitrary? Lugano pondered, surprised by the randomness of selecting their travel method to the Feynapotter Kingdom through drawing lots. Despite the absurdity, he dutifully picked up a paper ball.

In any case, he had already received the 5,000 verl d’or advance payment!

Lugano unfolded the paper and read the word “ship.”

Lumian nodded and smiled.

“Very good. Then let’s take the steam locomotive.”

"…" Lugano's expression became uncertain as he instinctively glanced at the wanted criminal worth 60,000 verl d'or sitting across from him. He wondered if Lumian was manipulating him to eliminate the wrong option or simply playing a prank.

Forcing another smile, Lugano suggested, "Shall we head back to the Suhit steam locomotive station?"

"No, to the Northern Train Station," Lumian replied, turning to Ludwig, who had been quietly eating without uttering a word.

Northern Train Station? Lugano felt increasingly puzzled by his employer's decision.

Trier had two main steam locomotive stations: Suhit, connecting the southern and central regions, and the Northern Train Station, responsible for the northern provinces. If their destination was the Feynapotter Kingdom and Riston Province, the logical choice would be Suhit. Why, then, were they going north?

Recognizing that it wasn't his place to question his employer's decisions, Lugano instructed the carriage driver to alter their course.

As noon approached, the rental carriage arrived at the Northern Trier Train Station.

I have to disguise myself and find a broker to fake my identity to buy a ticket… As Lugano directed the carriage driver to a more remote area, he turned to look at Lumian, preparing to make a suggestion.

He was met with an unfamiliar face.

The short flaxen-colored hair, brown eyes, and other facial features combined to create the appearance of a stranger.

If not for the silver earring on his right ear and the familiar clothes, Lugano might have believed they were ambushed by official Beyonders, having quietly dealt with Lumian.

"Purchase a ticket to Port Gati in Upper Coastal Province," Lumian calmly instructed.

Upper Coastal Province, Port Gati… Lugano suddenly grasped Lumian's strategy.

While his employer did intend to take a boat to the Feynapotter Kingdom, he chose a less obvious route. Instead of departing from the nearest Port LeSeur in Paz Province, he opted for Upper Coastal Province to the north.

…

In the business carriage of the steam locomotive, divided into six cozy private rooms, Lumian's gaze swept across the slightly ajar carved wooden door, the table adorned with a vibrant, multi-colored tablecloth interwoven with golden threads, the plush sofa that doubled as a bed, and the slender wooden wall adorned with oil paintings. A satisfied nod escaped him.

A private room like this commanded a hefty price of 400 verl d'or, accommodating no more than four individuals.

The steam locomotive promised a 12-hour journey with an eight-hour night stop, totaling 20 hours. Travel costs were 30 verl d'or for a third-class seat, 45 verl d'or for second class, and 60 verl d'or for first class. The exclusive small private rooms in business class demanded 100 verl d'or per person, sold only in packages to maintain the privacy of business companions.

For a wanted fugitive like Lumian, this setup was perfect.

Equipped with the Lie earring and the Niese Face, Lumian had no real need for the privacy or luxury of the business carriage, but there was a compelling reason for his choice:

The business carriage provided two complimentary meals—dinner tonight and breakfast tomorrow.

A convenience that would spare Lumian from many hassles.

Sigh, a child has to eat something warm.

I just hope his appetite doesn't startle the attendants…

After catering to Ludwig for over two days, Lumian recognized the importance of his Traveler's Bag, capable of storing ample rations and desserts for long trips with the boy. The boy had to eat frequently!

Amidst the whistle, Lumian settled into his seat, absorbing the rhythmic clanging sounds as the scenery rapidly retreated on both sides.

In less than fifteen minutes, the colossal steam-spewing train departed from the bustling metropolis through the "cave door" carved into the high wall.

It left behind a metropolis pulsating with desires, immersed in both joy and pain.

Lumian half-closed his eyes, overhearing someone in the private room ahead sigh, as if reciting a poem.

"Goodbye, Trier!"

At 8 p.m., under the cover of complete darkness, the steam locomotive came to a halt at its scheduled stop—Dardel Station.

Situated on the outskirts of the Upper Coastal Province's Faust region, in Darder Town, the platform was already bustling with 20 to 30 men and women eagerly rushing to different carriages. Devoid of luggage, their faces radiated enthusiasm.

Knock! Knock! Knock! A middle-aged man, sporting thick black hair and a slightly hooked chin, rapped on the glass window corresponding to Lumian's private room.

With interest, Lumian pushed open the window and greeted with a smile, "What can I do for you?"

"Monsieur, would you like a drink? Perhaps a cozy bed instead of a sofa?" the middle-aged man inquired in Intisian, his accent heavy.

"A bar with its own motel?" Lumian was enlightened.

It seemed like local merchants were soliciting customers right on the platform.

"That's right, that's right. Our bar boasts some charming little frogs," the middle-aged man winked suggestively.

"Little frogs?" Lugano, seated across from Lumian, asked, puzzled.

The middle-aged man pondered for a moment and explained, "That's our slang here in Coastal. It means the same as your Trier pussies."

In Trier, "pussies" often carried dual meanings, referring to both "female reproductive organs" and "prostitutes."

Is that so… Lumian had suspected as much but wasn't entirely certain.

Seated beside Lugano, Ludwig chimed in eagerly, "Anything good to eat?"

Without awaiting the middle-aged man's response, Lumian teased Ludwig with a smile, "I thought you were going to ask if the meat was tender or chewy and if it tasted good."

Initially unresponsive, Ludwig suddenly realized something and cursed, "Sick!"

Observing this, the middle-aged man swiftly introduced the local specialties.

Meanwhile, outside the station, dogs started barking in the town.

A lone bark triggered a chorus of canine voices, shattering the night's silence.

The middle-aged man's expression shifted, tainted with an indescribable sense of fear.

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Chapter 506 - 506 Illness

506 Illness

Amidst the nighttime cacophony of the town's barking dogs, Lumian let out a low chuckle.

"Do you have that many dogs in Dardel?"

"Y-yes." The middle-aged man managed a hesitant smile.

Something is off as expected. Has something happened to this town? Lumian had intentionally inquired, keen on observing the reactions of the resident across from him.

Amidst the persisting dog chorus, he concentrated on gauging the other party's luck.

He had no plans to leave the steam locomotive and venture into Dardel for investigation. His only recourse was to probe into the luck of the town's residents, anticipating hidden problems before they could unexpectedly spread to the train station.

While Termiboros could influence his luck observation, there was always a chance of being misled. Lumian, lacking expertise in divination or prophecy, had limited options for gathering information without leaving the steam locomotive.

Factoring in various environmental details, he aimed to discern potential issues.

In Lumian's view, the middle-aged man's luck took on a ghastly green hue.

This indicated an impending illness—a rather peculiar one.

The specifics, such as when or what kind of illness, eluded Lumian's current Sequence.

Dog barking inducing fear, future special illness—do Dardel's wild dogs cause calamities by biting and spreading diseases? That's a plausible explanation, and it's not a Beyonder incident, but that means there's a potential solution. The man outside seems to be grappling with a hint of despair… Lumian turned to the middle-aged man who was soliciting customers and said, "Can you bring over the food we ordered?"

"We can do so if the meal cost exceeds two verl d'or. You know, it's not easy for us to enter the platform," the middle-aged man, now smiling again, replied.

At that moment, the clamor of dozens of dogs subsided, no longer as intense as before.

“No problem,” Lumian casually ordered a variety of dishes—apple liqueur, deep-fried potato pancakes, shrimp in gravy, Dardel meat sauce, stewed pork, saltmarsh mutton, buttered pancakes, and wick cheese. The total cost amounted to 10 verl d’or.

Ludwig couldn’t help but gulp with each mention of a dish.

Four hours prior, an attendant had delivered a four-person standard dinner. Despite managing to finish two portions alone, Ludwig remained unsatisfied. He had also retrieved multiple pieces of jerky from Lumian’s Traveler’s Bag.

Two hours ago, he had his first supper, consisting of cheese, dessert, bread, jerky, and more.

Now, he was hungry again.

The middle-aged man, who had used simple words and symbols to record the dish names, couldn’t resist asking,

“Is the food provided in a carriage of this level not tasty?”

Otherwise, why would Ludwig look as though he hadn’t eaten dinner?

Lumian responded in turn, “That’s right. Don’t ever expect to eat tasty food on a steam locomotive.”

After noting down the dish names and receiving 5 verl d’or banknotes as a down payment, the middle-aged man with a slightly hooked chin moved to another private room.

“Wait,” Lumian suddenly called out.

“Is there anything else, Monsieur?” the middle-aged man turned around and inquired.

Lumian smiled and said, “You don’t look well. If you don’t want to get sick, you need more rest in the next few days.”

The middle-aged man froze, his expression struck by lightning.

After a momentary pause, panic and fear mixed on his face.

“A-alright. Thank you.” He turned around in a hurry and dashed out of the platform, forgetting to solicit other customers.

Dardel’s abnormality is indeed linked to illnesses… Lumian mused as he withdrew his gaze thoughtfully.

Lugano asked with curiosity, “Why can’t I tell that he’s sub-healthy and could fall ill at any moment?”

Being a Doctor, he possessed corresponding abilities. Even without activating his Spirit Vision, he could discern various external manifestations of a person’s body.

Recognizing a concealed illness and with Lumian’s warning, he activated his Spirit Vision to observe the person’s Ether Body.

“Sub-healthy” was a term coined by Emperor Roselle, but it had only gained popularity in Intis’s medical world in recent years.

He’s not currently in a sub-healthy state, but it’s very likely that he will contract a special illness… Lumian used Lugano’s questions to confirm that the townsfolk’s illness didn’t originate from him.

He smiled and responded to Lugano’s question, “It’s never wrong to care about others’ health and encourage them to rest more.”

Instinctively, Lugano revealed an expression that said, “I don’t buy it.” Then, he masked it with a smile.

“He seems to share that concern.”

“That’s right,” Lumian replied patronizingly.

Dardel’s barking subsided and resounded at times. Sometimes, it was just outside the platform, and at other times, it came from the edge of the town. Lumian listened quietly and sighed inwardly.

Why am I encountering something like this again?

Do I bring calamity, or does calamity lure me here?

From the looks of it, the problem in Dardel has been around for a while. It has nothing to do with my arrival… No matter how I avoid it or make choices via the use of others, I’ll always be drawn to calamities and unknowingly approach them…

Is this why a Hunter with an angelic level and the Blood Emperor’s remnant aura will inevitably encounter an abnormal situation despite their low Sequence?

In the future, will a novelist write about my experiences like Gehrman Sparrow’s? Then, the line “he’s always accompanied by calamity” would be included.

As time ticked by, the middle-aged man who had been soliciting customers arrived with a bar waiter, each carrying a food container.

“Is this what you want?” He and the waiter handed plates and glasses through the window.

Seeing the table covered in an exquisite tablecloth filled with tempting food, Lumian took a sip of the slightly sour apple liqueur and paid the remaining 5 verl d'or for the meal.

"We'll collect the cutlery in an hour. We won't be disturbing you, will we?" the middle-aged man asked politely.

Lumian nodded, giving them permission.

After sidestepping with the waiter for a moment, the middle-aged man found himself returning to his original position. He couldn't resist the urge to inquire,

"Monsieur, how do you know I'm about to fall ill?"

Lumian, gesturing towards Lugano across the way, explained, "My friend is a renowned doctor in Trier."

The term "renowned" here applied to a wanted poster.

Without awaiting the middle-aged man's reply, Lumian casually inquired, "What's your name?"

"Just call me Pierre," the middle-aged man replied, hunched over as he observed Lumian in the snug private room on the steam locomotive.

Do you folks fancy that name around here too? Lumian grinned and asked, "Do you think you'll get sick too?"

Pierre's eyelids twitched, his expression momentarily freezing.

Instinctively, he replied, "No, no. Just a bit concerned."

"Well then, get some rest, drink more water, and perhaps seek out the clergyman at the cathedral for repentance," Lumian advised without pressing further.

Pierre moved towards the front of the locomotive in silence, hoping to drum up more business. However, his steps seemed burdened, as if his feet were encased in lead, each stride a struggle.

"Woof, woof, woof!"

The barking resumed near the platform.

Pierre's face contorted, overwhelmed with worry and fear. Suddenly, he turned around, shaking off the waiter and rushing to the window of the small private room where Lumian and the others were situated.

"Save me, Doctor, save me!" he pleaded, pressing his hands against the glass with a desperate expression.

Lumian seized the moment, stating, “Unless you disclose the cause of the illness, my friend won’t be able to treat you.”

The commotion reached the passengers in the adjacent private rooms, but in their slumber, they were indifferent to the unfolding drama.

Pierre swallowed hard, stealing a glance at the equally terrified bar waiter.

“Yes, yes…”

Before he could complete his sentence, a figure materialized on the platform’s wall.

The figure stood firmly, legs apart, body contorted, but its head tilted upward, fixated on some distant point.

It was a man, clad in tweed garments, conspicuously marked by tears and frays. His facial muscles contorted dramatically, and his eyes were rolled back, leaving only a white patch visible.

Saliva dribbled from his open mouth as he attempted to speak.

“Woof! Woof! Woof!”

The barking harmonized with the other canine sounds in Dardel, forming a disconcerting chorus.

“It’s Derangement!” Pierre finally exclaimed.

“Derangement?” Lumian shifted his attention from the man barking on the wall to Lugano.

Lugano observed the abnormality for a moment before slowly shaking his head at Lumian.

His message was clear: this wasn’t your typical case of rabies.

Pierre, mistakenly thinking Lumian was addressing him, was on the brink of emotional collapse.

“Yes, Derangement!

“I don’t know when it started. People in our town began turning into barking lunatics. Initially, it was just one, but then two, three, ten… Many acquaintances of mine got infected, completely losing their minds. They only bark like dogs and are most active during the night!”

“Did they contract it from being bitten by these lunatics?” Lugano inquired with a furrowed brow.

“No, the ones I know weren’t bitten, but they still went mad! I-I feel like I’m soon next!” Pierre exclaimed in despair.

“You didn’t seek help from the government?” Lumian was puzzled, thinking that official Beyonders wouldn’t allow such a situation to escalate.

“We heard about a village having a similar situation as Derangement; they reported it to the government, and then the whole village vanished. We… we didn’t dare approach either the government or the Church!” Pierre explained frantically, with the bar waiter by his side equally terrified.

Lumian’s eyes narrowed.

“Where are the people from the town’s health department, police station, and the cathedral’s padre?”

“They were the first to succumb to madness.” Pierre, caught up in distress, didn’t consider Lumian’s intentions in asking.

The initial casualties were the padre, police, and health officials… Lumian raised an eyebrow and remarked, “So why haven’t you tried escaping from Dardel?”

“Escape…” Pierre and the bar waiter were startled, staring blankly at Lumian.

Beneath the crimson moonlight, the whites of their eyes took on a bloodshot hue.

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Chapter 507 - 507 Dead End

507 Dead End

Pierre and the bar waiter locked eyes with Lumian and the others, their bloodshot gaze shifting from vacant to sheer terror.

Abruptly, Pierre's face contorted, and he bellowed in hysteria, "None of you can leave!

"Once the outsiders catch wind of this, we're all done for!"

He swiftly maneuvered through the steam locomotive's open window, attempting to climb in and forcefully pull Lumian and the others out.

In response, Lugano rose to his feet, delivering a powerful blow with his right fist.

With a resounding thud, Pierre slumped, unconscious, hanging awkwardly from the window. The bar waiter, seemingly unhinged, trampled over the fallen man, attempting to leap into the carriage.

Lugano struck again, his punch rendering the bloodshot-eyed bar waiter unconscious. He slumped over Pierre, creating an unusual tableau.

They didn't abnormally transform into monsters… Lumian had previously speculated that the two town folks had succumbed suddenly to Derangement.

Turning to Lumian, Lugano inquired in a low voice, "What do we do?"

"What do we do?" Lumian echoed the Doctor's inquiry.

The unfolding events not only displayed an abnormality but also left him with a sense of inner conflict and displacement.

The peculiar Derangement, causing people to lose their sanity and transform into canine-like creatures, coupled with the consecutive onset of various illnesses, unmistakably hinted at supernatural forces at play. However, the mystery deepened as Pierre and the other townsfolk, who were evidently concerned about keeping Derangement a secret, freely disclosed the information to Lumian.

This apparent contradiction could be attributed to Pierre's overwhelming mental stress, pushed to the brink. Lumian's mention of future sickness served as the tipping point, prompting Pierre to instinctively guard the secret from leaking when reminded.

Yet, the lingering question persisted: Why not escape?

Faced with an infectious and unstoppable Derangement, wouldn't it be prudent for ordinary humans to flee Dardel and return once the plague had subsided?

Even if they feared attracting attention from the authorities by fleeing, a temporary escape into the nearby mountains after addressing those potentially afflicted could provide a solution.

Unless there was some force preventing the citizens of Dardel from escaping!

Lumian deduced this from various details.

The townsfolk were cognizant of similar Derangement cases elsewhere, resulting in entire villages being wiped out by the authorities. Normally, such incidents would be reported as a tragic disaster with everyone buried.

After the initial infection, key figures like the cathedral's clergyman, the police, and health department officials succumbed to madness, severing Dardel's connection with regional authorities from the start.

Why would this mastermind allow Pierre and others to divulge the situation to the Doctor on the steam locomotive?

Lumian, thinking from the mastermind's perspective, considered it illogical to choose a transportation hub regularly frequented by steam locomotives. Even without Lumian's inquiries, those choosing to enter Dardel to sleep under a warm blanket and sample beautiful frogs would eventually notice the abnormality, raising suspicions. They couldn't all be made to stay behind, could they? This would lead to an investigation!

There are many contradictions, inconsistencies, and inexplicable aspects… He's smart yet foolish, cautious yet careless… Lumian, contemplating the intricacies, turned to Lugano and said, "What else can we do? Of course, we have to find a way to inform the authorities about this. Don't tell me you want to investigate the source of the Derangement and save the residents here, do you? I didn't expect you to be so noble."

Lugano smiled awkwardly. The latter possibility had never crossed his mind.

"How should we inform the authorities?" he asked sincerely, admitting his lack of experience in such matters.

"The simplest solution is to get the train police here and tell them what Pierre said. Have them use the train's radio to contact the relevant departments in the Faust area or the Upper Coastal Province," Lumian suggested casually.

However, Lugano hesitated, expressing concern, "B-but as witnesses, we'll be invited to assist in the investigation. O-our identities are fake, and even if we use your mystical item to change our appearances, it's easy to expose that we're

Beyonders under the influence of some mysticism abilities."

Lumian pondered for a moment and offered an alternative with a smile, "Then find an empty room on the platform, pile dozens of bundles of explosives, and detonate them. The explosion will send the roof flying, destroying the house. This way, the conductor and the train police will report it quickly, and the officials in the Faust area will take notice. When they investigate further, they'll discover the hidden problem in Dardel. How about that? We won't need to personally show our faces in this plan, right?"

Lugano considered the proposal but raised another concern, "When the authorities investigate further, they'll discover that we've interacted with Dardel's residents. They'll worry that we might also be in danger of contracting Derangement. When the time comes, we won't be able to pass the scrutiny."

Lumian felt a twinge of frustration, recalling how he and his sister had been trapped in Cordu after the abnormality. Everything they did had its cons.

He chuckled and said, "Then investigate the source of the Derangement personally and blast it into pieces!

"This will completely resolve the problem without attracting the officials' attention!"

Ludwig, who had consumed countless suppers, swallowed the deep-fried potato pie in his mouth and calmly said, "After informing the authorities about Derangement, why stay here and wait for them to investigate?

"Can't we just leave, change our identities, and take another steam locomotive to another port?"

Uh… Lumian was taken aback.

Why hadn't I thought of such a simple idea?

Just now, the more Lugano and I discussed, the deeper we delved into a dead end. We were entirely focused on finding a reason and excuse for entering Dardel to investigate the source of the Derangement…

A realization hit Lumian, and his heart skipped a beat.

Nonchalantly, he gazed at Lugano, assessing the Doctor's luck.

The other party's luck in the future would also be tainted with a ghastly green!

With a smile, Lumian said to Lugano, "You also have the possibility of contracting Derangement."

Lugano was taken aback for a moment before asking with a pale face, "Really?"

“Think of it as a joke,” Lumian turned his head, seemingly relaxed, and said to Ludwig, “See, there are many benefits to studying more. In the past, you wouldn’t have thought of such a solution and only knew nothing but eating.”

Ignoring the Hunter, Ludwig forked a piece of mutton into his mouth.

Lumian interrupted him.

“No rush. There’s just a risk of contracting the illness. You just need to leave this place before you get truly infected.”

As he spoke, he stood up and walked out of the private room.

“W-where are you going?” Lugano blurted out.

Lumian slipped his hands into his pockets and responded with a smile. “Inform the authorities about Derangement.”

Lugano was momentarily at a loss for words and expressions. All he could do was watch in a daze as Lumian strolled out of the private room.

Reaching the train’s washroom, Lumian locked the door and activated the black mark representing Spirit World Traversal.

His figure swiftly vanished, reappearing in Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative in Trier.

Neither Franca nor Jenna was asleep at this hour. One was engrossed in a novel, while the other contemplated what knowledge to impart to Rabbit Chasel.

“W-why are you back?” Franca jumped in fright.

She had the illusion that she had just dropped him off at school in the morning and found him at home, legs up, eating snacks, and watching television in the afternoon.

Lumian glanced at Franca and smiled. “We encountered a Beyonder incident and wish to inform the authorities through your channels to have them resolve it.”

Franca exclaimed in surprise and amusement, “Y-you encountered another Beyonder incident? What a mysticism catastrophe detector!?”

Jenna looked at Lumian and suddenly felt that it was a good thing for him to leave Trier.

“I didn’t want to either.” Lumian spread his hands sincerely.

Franca exhaled and said, “Where is it? What kind of incident?”

“In Dardel in Upper Coastal Province’s Faust region…” Lumian briefly recounted the situation.

Franca and Jenna were both surprised and terrified by the contagious Derangement.

Simultaneously, Franca muttered inwardly, I wonder how 007 will react to this “surprise”…

He’s always telling me to get out of the market district. If I really do, he’ll realize that not only will Beyonder cases in Trier’s other districts pile up on him, the mystical catastrophes of Intis’s other provinces will also descend upon him…

Ah, that’s right. What does it have to do with me? It’s all Lumian’s fault!

Thankfully, this fellow is heading to the Feynapotter Kingdom in the future. No matter what Beyonder incidents he encounters, it’s no longer 007’s problem. He can’t possibly collaborate across borders…

After explaining the situation in Dardel, Lumian didn’t linger. He “teleported” back to the washroom of the steam locomotive’s business carriage.

He turned on the tap and washed his hands without hesitation. Then, he left the washroom and returned to the small private room. He said to Lugano, “The authorities will react soon. Let’s prepare to leave.”

Lugano sprang to his feet.

At that moment, the unconscious Pierre slowly regained consciousness, shaking the bar waiter off his body and landing on the platform.

Lumian looked at him and smiled.

“We’ll stay and investigate the source of Derangement. Can you tell me who patient zero was?”

“Who was it…” Pierre didn’t lose his mind and attack Lumian and the others like before. Instead, he fell into deep thought.

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Chapter 508 - 508 Patient Zero

508 Patient Zero

Lugano, who had been listening, shot Lumian a puzzled glance. He couldn't fathom why Lumian would strike up a casual conversation with Pierre just as they were on the verge of departing.

A few more moments, and the official Beyonders would make their entrance!

Besides, delving too deep into this matter could invite trouble down the road. They might end up under scrutiny, or worse, attract the attention of the Derangement's source, prompting immediate intervention!

Pierre pondered for more than ten seconds before uttering with uncertainty, "Patient Zero seemed to be a guest renting a room at our bar…"

"Foreigner?" Lumian inquired with composure.

Having already briefed the official Beyonders about the Derangement through Franca and resolved to find an opportunity to "teleport" away later, Lumian was no longer as tense as before. Thus, before leaving, he aimed to unravel more about Derangement and construct a plausible explanation for the inconsistencies.

This quest for information, problem analysis, and uncovering of clues and answers was all part of a Conspirer's acting. With some idle time on his hands, Lumian seized the chance to digest some of the potion.

Lumian wasn't overly concerned about the potential repercussions of being privy to this situation.

Could the information on Derangement hold a candle to 0-01's sealed intel?

Moreover, as long as he didn't go berserk on the spot, he could later seek assistance from his superior to explore potential solutions!

Pierre contemplated for a few seconds, his expression reflecting confusion, and then he said, "Probably… I can't recall her name, and I have no idea where she came from. All I remember is that she suddenly lost her mind and dashed from the motel upstairs to the bar. She tried to bite people and barked like a dog."

The infected foreigner spreading Derangement to Dardel? Then why were the townsfolk displaying no inclination to escape this place? Is this also a manifestation of Derangement? Lumian asked thoughtfully, "Did she manage to bite anyone? What happened to her?"

“We took care of her before she could sink her teeth into anyone. We apprehended her and handed her over to the health department,” Pierre recollected.

Sent to the health department? Lumian nodded slowly.

“Did the next person to succumb to madness come from the health department?”

“Yes, exactly!” Pierre affirmed this time.

Lumian pondered for a moment and inquired, “What did the resident look like?”

“A young woman. Her face was a bit pale, and her eyes were vacant. I-I can’t recall her appearance…” Pierre couldn’t help but raise his palm and rub his head.

Upon hearing this, Lumian’s heart stirred.

If the root of all the abnormalities in Dardel indeed stemmed from a deranged individual, many contradictions could find an explanation!

Patient Zero was already in a state of madness; instinctively, she would spread Derangement to those around her in a supernatural sense, regardless of whether it was an isolated village or a bustling town serving as a transportation hub.

Simultaneously, she would subconsciously employ her ability to disseminate the supernatural Derangement, dropping hints to the townsfolk that leaving wasn’t an option. She would control all channels that might carry the news. However, due to her madness and lack of thorough consideration, she didn’t explicitly order the townsfolk not to discuss Derangement with the steam locomotive passengers.

Certainly, it wasn’t necessarily due to a lack of thorough consideration. Lumian believed it was more plausible that the lunatic’s instincts desired to involve more people and infect them with Derangement. Consequently, people who were aware of this weren’t permitted to leave or seek help from the authorities. On the other hand, the prohibition didn’t prevent residents from discussing Derangement with passersby.

This was a limited and relatively safe method of contagion. Passengers who knew about Derangement were akin to approaching the source of the plague. For instance, Lugano’s luck had turned, increasing the probability of contracting the disease. Lumian and he had forgotten the option of escaping. The more they communicated, the more desperate they became, ultimately reaching a dead end. They were resolute in entering Dardel to investigate.

This was a precursor to becoming infected with Derangement. Unbeknownst to them, they had inadvertently received a mental cue.

With this in mind, Lumian suspected that the young woman might be a survivor of the village that had previously been eradicated, a potential carrier who had escaped the authorities’ purge.

She had intertwined these memories with Derangement and disseminated them. That was how the residents of Dardel learned about a similar plague in a village wiped out by the authorities.

Typically, they lacked the qualifications or means to know such things!

Having formulated this preliminary hypothesis, Lumian smiled and turned to Pierre and the bar waiter, asking, “Where is the village you mentioned that was destroyed by the authorities because of Derangement?”

“I-I think it’s somewhere in the Haut-Hornacis Province…” Pierre recalled the rumors he had heard.

Haut-Hornacis Province… That’s quite a distance from Upper Coastal Province. Moreover, there’s no direct steam locomotive; it requires a transfer through a few provinces in the West Midseashire Coast or Trier. How could you folks, who rarely leave Dardel, have heard such a rumor? Did a bard or passenger from Haut-Hornacis Province pass by this transportation hub? The more Lumian pondered, the more he leaned toward his hypothesis.

He refrained from pressing further and probed Pierre, “This Derangement holds significant research value. We’ll venture into Dardel to investigate its source and try to find a cure.

“However, preparations will take some time. Moreover, it’s nighttime.

“At dawn, we will step into Dardel. We won’t depart until we resolve the problem.”

Lumian stressed the phrases “will enter Dardel” and “will not leave for the time being” to gauge Pierre and the bar waiter’s reactions.

Their expressions underwent several changes, and they were no longer as hysterical as before.

After a few moments, Pierre implored, “You must come to town tomorrow!”

“No problem,” Lumian replied with a reassuring smile.

He was now even more convinced that this was an instinctive infection and influence. There was no structured approach to handling the alterations. As long as he avoided triggering a crucial matter or even took the initiative to broach the topic of cooperation, he could effectively deceive the source of Derangement.

Observing Pierre and the bar waiter about to move toward the other windows of the steam locomotive, Lumian called out to them, “Wait a moment.”

After the two of them turned in surprise, Lumian gestured towards the table between the two sofas.

“You can take the cutlery away now.”

Pierre and the bar waiter glanced at the dining table in confusion, realizing that only remnants were left on the empty plates.

Had they finished eating already? The delivery men hadn’t even departed yet!

Pierre and the bar waiter were aware that they had spent a considerable amount of time discussing the Derangement issue, but it still felt surreal.

Won’t they eating too quickly?

Was he feeding three lions?

Burp… Ludwig wiped his mouth with a tablecloth, a content expression on his face.

After the two townsfolk cleared away the cutlery, gathered their food boxes, and departed from the platform, Lumian smiled at Lugano and remarked, “Continue watching. Chill.”

I can’t chill. How are we to escape when the official Beyonders arrive? Lugano’s heart felt like it was being grilled.

Observing his reaction, Lumian muttered silently, He’s indeed acting like a wild Beyonder with a low Sequence and little knowledge… He doesn’t show anything special like Ludwig… Is he really an ordinary wild Beyonder who only accepted a mission to follow me?

Simultaneously, Lumian focused his attention and checked Lugano’s luck. He realized that the ghastly green traces had vanished, and there was no grisly calamity in store.

This meant that the Doctor no longer had the potential to contract Derangement, and he likely wouldn’t be embroiled in the officials’ operations to deal with Dardel’s abnormality later.

After a while, Lumian heard a loud noise and saw the night suddenly brighten outside.

Light streamed down from midair.

Lumian looked up and noticed two colossal objects floating in the night.

They were two airships clad in dark gray paint, frantically spinning their paddles.

They were much smaller than the one Lumian had seen in Trier. The condensed light shone from their front and lower positions, converging on the edge of Dardel.

Simultaneously, the town erupted in a cacophony of barking once more, as if movement was taking place everywhere.

The officials from the Faust region are here? Lumian averted his gaze, awaiting the outcome.

Shouts, cries, gunshots, and various beams of sunlight continued for nearly an hour before completely subsiding.

Before long, a team of police officers entered the private room, questioning the now disguised, fake identification-wielding Lumian and company's interactions with Dardel's residents.

Other than anything related to Derangement, Lumian told them everything honestly.

He was ready to "teleport" away with Ludwig and Lugano at any moment.

After recording and comparing tickets and identification, the police officers left the carriage.

Lumian patiently waited until dawn. The police officers returned, presenting three contracts and requesting their signatures.

The contract explained that the disturbance from the previous night had resulted from a special military operation, and everyone was obligated to keep it confidential.

Does what I revealed before my signature count? Lumian chuckled inwardly and calmly signed with an alias.

His fake identity had just been activated, and it had minimal mystic connections.

After the police departed, Lumian, having intentionally gone through the official process firsthand, intended to grasp Lugano and Ludwig's shoulders and "teleport" away.

Uncertain if the contract signed with an alias would be discovered, he aimed to avoid potential risks.

At that moment, Lumian noticed a towering figure behind Lugano.

It was his messenger, Penitent Baynfel, draped in a dark clergyman's robe and surrounded by charred flames.

Baynfel sent a folded letter drifting towards Lumian.

Lugano was taken aback to see a piece of paper materialize. He instinctively glanced behind him, but Lumian opened the letter and perused its contents.

“Based on the feedback I received, this should be the escape of a Sealed Artifact.

“That Sealed Artifact resembles a young woman. It first surfaced during a catastrophe in Haut-Hornacis Province. Most of the time, she remains in her normal state, appearing lifeless, pale, and muddle-headed. However, once she enters a state of madness, she gradually infects the surrounding people with the same Derangement as her. There’s no definite transmission pattern.

“She might not be in the same state every time she goes mad. The same goes for her Derangement symptoms.

“In her normal state, although she’s like an unintelligent ghost and acts on instinct, she possesses a power akin to the power of speech, where whatever she says comes true, and if she declares someone dead, they will die…”

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Chapter 509 - 509 Ironclad Merchant Ship

509 Ironclad Merchant Ship

Also possesses the ability to turn spoken words into reality… Before the Derangement took hold, she acted on instinct, her pale face and lifeless eyes mirroring the description of Patient Zero by Pierre. Lumian delved into the catastrophe's details through Franca's letter, gaining a deeper understanding.

The divergence lay in Lumian's belief that the initial infected individual was a genuine lunatic that acted on instinct, while official information identified her as a humanoid Sealed Artifact, still governed by instinct, that lacked intelligence whether in her normal state or deranged state.

Lumian's speculations, however, didn't rule out the possibility that the young woman had transformed into a true lunatic—one that instinctively spread Derangement—due to some form of corruption, necessitating her sealing.

As for why it was a seal and not a direct eradication, Lumian could roughly guess the reason.

The ability to kill anyone at will was still coveted, despite various restrictions. The power to eliminate anyone at will remained highly sought after, despite certain constraints. Whether it was the Inquisition, the Machinery Hivemind, or Bureau 8, they all prioritized sealing over destruction if a viable method existed. Lumian knew they might even depend on her to handle future crises.

His eyes moved down the letter's contents, absorbing the information.

"As for additional details, confidentiality prevents the source from providing more."

"Keep a vigilant eye on individuals like her. If you uncover anything suspicious, immediately distance yourself and report it to the authorities."

No specifics about her origins, the sealing technique, the manifestation of speech, or how to counteract Derangement were provided. No concrete seal level or number… Despite Dardel's abnormality and prior descriptions, even if it isn't a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact, it holds significant and terrifying properties among Grade 2 Sealed Artifacts… Lumian pondered briefly, then stowed the letter in his Traveler's Bag without incinerating it on the spot.

At that moment, Lugano was observing his back in bewilderment.

Despite activating his Spirit Vision, he found nothing.

Lumian's messenger, Penitent Baynfel, had long departed.

"Let's go," Lumian sighed, reaching out to grasp Ludwig and Lugano's shoulders.

His foremost regret was the wasted third of the 400 verl d'or fare.

He still needed to source different cafés for Ludwig's breakfast; he couldn't allow him to be satiated from one place to avoid raising suspicion.

In the next instant, Lugano felt as if he had crossed into the spirit world he'd just glimpsed. Instead of being a mere observer, he plunged deeper into layers of saturated colors, bathing in the light of seven different-colored brilliances overhead. Surrounded by indescribable faces and figures, he "sped" toward an unknown destination.

Dizziness overcame him, but in just over ten seconds, his feet met solid ground. Buildings in beige, brownish-red, and light yellow surrounded him.

Lumian hadn't "teleported" too far and chose Faust, with Dardel falling under its jurisdiction.

Under the dawn's light, Lumian adorned the Lie earring and retrieved a tweed coat from his Traveler's Bag, seamlessly altering his appearance, height, and attire in a secluded alley.

In less than a minute, he morphed into an entirely different person.

What a mystical item and formidable ability!

Lumian tossed the Lie earring to Lugano, casually stating, "Get three more sets of fake identities and buy steam locomotive tickets that will arrive in Port Gati today."

Am I a translator, guide, or your attendant? Lugano criticized as he caught the mystical silver earring.

He forced a smile and said, "I've never been to the Faust area, so I don't know who to find for fake identities."

"The principles are common. I trust your experience," Lumian replied with a smile.

Alright, since you're paying… Lugano muttered silently, retrieving a change of clothes from his suitcase.

At the Northern Trier Train Station, Lumian had already paid him 1,000 verl d'or for the fake identities and informed him that he would handle similar expenses in the future.

After Ludwig put on the Lie earring, Lugano left the alley with his suitcase.

Lumian activated the Niese Face, altering his appearance once more, and trailed Lugano from afar while holding Ludwig, who was adjusting his height and appearance.

He wanted to observe the Doctor's actions and reactions in an unfamiliar place to uncover potential issues.

To prevent Ludwig from protesting, Lumian held down his wide-brimmed hat and tossed him a few loaves of baguettes.

Ludwig, not clamoring for a hot meal, obediently nibbled on the food as Lumian pulled him along.

In the early morning, the bars were closed, so Lugano headed to the nearest market and approached a prowler suspected to be a mobster. Using money, he bought access and discovered where to obtain fake identities.

Throughout the process, Lugano appeared no different from an ordinary bounty hunter.

Lumian wasn't disappointed or displeased. He calmly followed Lugano until he secured a differently scheduled steam locomotive. Only then did he dispel the Niese Face and rendezvous with his companion.

…

In Port Gati, Upper Coastal Province, Lumian occupied a luxurious hotel room near the sea.

Standing before the expansive glass window, he observed the azure sky, seemingly washed in water, contrasting with the clear and pure sea below, resembling gems.

The clear and melodious calls of gurgling seabirds, accompanied by their graceful figures, traversed between white clouds, white beaches, and ship masts. Even without opening the window, Lumian could intuitively feel the refreshing sea breeze from the sea.

This port, a main entry point for products from industrial cities in the West Midseashire Coast into the Fog Sea, was famous for trade and shipbuilding, boasting prosperity.

Contrary to Trieriens' beliefs about scarce sunlight in the north, Port Gati remained perpetually bathed in sunlight, with autumn maintaining a mild temperature.

As Ludwig chewed, Lumian admired the seascape and distant harbor, awaiting Lugano's return with tickets to the Feynapotter Kingdom's Port Santa.

At that moment, Penitent Baynfel, abnormally tall and clad in a black clergyman's robe, emerged from the void, silently handing Lumian a letter.

"Thank you," Lumian acknowledged out of habit before taking the letter and unfolding it.

"According to the information gathered at the scene, it appears she returned to normal a few days ago and left Dardel. Her current whereabouts are unknown. The spreading Derangement resulted from the severely corrupted sea of minds.

"The townsfolk's abnormal behavior—unwilling to leave Dardel yet keen on informing passersby about Derangement—likely stems from the corrupted sea of minds. Anthony's recently learned terminology describes it as a sea of collective subconscious forming a mind world with the island of consciousness and the spirituality sky.

"Be cautious in the future; there's a risk of being drawn to another mystical catastrophe caused by the Sealed Artifact."

They didn't catch the Sealed Artifact… Lumian clicked his tongue, sensing a brewing headache.

Honestly, there was nothing he could do. Upon arriving in Dardel, the other party had already departed, leaving the catastrophe still unfolding.

At 3 p.m., Lumian, accompanied by Lugano and Ludwig, boarded the Flying Bird, a merchant ship bound for the Feynapotter Kingdom's Port Santa.

Opting for a first-class cabin, they secured a suite featuring a master bedroom, a child's room, a servant's quarters, a living room, and a washroom. With specialized attendants at their service, they gained access to the most upscale dining room and the exclusive cigar room. The cost, a hefty 700 verl d'or, was nearly equivalent to Charlie's annual income as a hotel attendant.

Money was something Lumian cared about, yet not too much. Past experiences and his sister's guidance had made him instinctively calculative, but the relatively "easy" acquisition of money, like the 30,000 verl d'or he obtained from the safe at Salle de Bal Brise, lessened the sting.

Besides, he already possessed the potion formula, main ingredients, and supplementary ingredients for his next Sequence, eliminating the immediate need for accumulating funds.

As a devoted reader of The Adventurer series, Lumian knew of the numerous human-shaped treasures at sea. If he needed money, he was willing to imitate his idol and cull them.

The Flying Bird, the latest steam-powered ship, was entirely made of steel, with no sails but smokestacks emitting fog and masts with watchtowers.

Iron-gray with intertwining red and gold colors, the ship boasted a wide deck, numerous gun emplacements, and surpassed classic sailboats in displacement, passenger capacity, speed, and sturdiness. When compared to those backward-era fellows, it was like an adult looking down on children.

Before the Cordu incident, Lumian had considered embarking on a maritime journey, inspired by the adventurer Gehrman Sparrow, to entice his sister. However, Aurore had deferred this plan until after his university graduation.

In the spacious, brightly lit living room of the first-class cabin, Lumian gazed out the window at the azure sea, lost in thought.

Ooo!

Amidst the whistle, mist billowed from the chimneys of the Flying Bird.

The massive iron-armored merchant ship slowly departed Port Gati, accompanied by the symphony of various machinery starting to operate, heading into the depths of the sea.

Squawk! Squawk! The cries of seabirds reverberated through the clouds.

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Chapter 510 - 510 First Day at Sea

510 First Day at Sea

Amidst the billowing smoke, the Flying Bird cut through the Fog Sea, heading west towards the Intis colony in the Fog Sea Archipelago. They were the same islands in the saying, “never trust an Islander.” From there, it would journey south to Port Santa, northwest of the Feynapotter Kingdom.

Though the Fog Sea was notorious for its heavy fog, the offshore areas were less affected. Lumian spent the next three hours under the bright sun, immersed in a book—an introductory textbook for the Feynapotter Kingdom’s Highlander language. While he had Lugano, his translator and guide, Lumian didn’t want to be completely reliant on him for information and communication. If anything happened to Lugano, or if he were to deliberately manipulate translations, Lumian would be vulnerable.

Mastering some basic Highlander phrases before reaching Port Santa would allow Lumian to verify the accuracy of translations and give him some independence.

Typically, learning Highlander in less than ten days was nearly impossible for Beyonders not from the Reader pathway. However, Lumian had a significant advantage: his knowledge of ancient Feysac, the original language from which Highlander evolved. The two languages shared many similarities in sentence structure, meaning, grammar, and word structure, allowing Lumian to learn Highlander much faster.

“When can dinner be delivered?” Ludwig paced restlessly in front of Lumian’s recliner, frustrated that the exclusive attendant hadn’t yet arrived with dinner, despite the darkening sky.

Lumian closed his book as the sun dipped below the horizon, casting long shadows illuminated by the kerosene lamp. With a chuckle, he said, “Blame yourself for ordering so much. They need time to cook it all. Thankfully, the first-class cabin has an independent kitchen, otherwise they’d be overwhelmed…”

Before he could finish, the doorbell rang.

As the chimes reverberated, Lugano opened the thick vermilion door to find the young attendant pushing a dining cart into the room, its surface covered in a thick yellowish-brown carpet.

Under Ludwig’s eager gaze, the attendant calmly laid out the tablecloth and utensils.

“This is a local delicacy, Gati herring. It involves marinating smoked soft herring filets, onions, and carrot slices in olive oil, thyme, bay leaves, and other spices for 24 to 48 hours. It’s perfect with warm potato salad.”

“And these are deep-fried fries. In Upper Coastal Province, there’s a saying: without fries, there’s no heaven…

“There’s also raisin cream bread…

“These are fresh oysters and shellfish…

“This is Faust turkey, ham and mushroom burrito. This is Umu’s duck minced meat and coarse brown sugar vanilla waffle…

“This is traditional orange cheese… and there’s also a pungent gray cheese. Would you like to give it a try?

“This is Upper Coastal Province’s favorite apple cider[1]…”

Lumian listened with genuine interest as the attendant described each dish. He noticed that, despite his impatience, Ludwig didn’t immediately attack his food. Instead, he waited patiently until the attendant finished before sampling the pre-meal bread and savoring the pickled herring.

Did something awaken in him? Lumian glanced at the child in confusion.

“Not bad,” Ludwig remarked with a professional air. “The smoky taste is just right. It blends perfectly with the fragrance and seasoning…”

Despite his praise, seven-year-old Lumian couldn’t help but find the whole scene with Ludwig’s chubby, youthful face and serious demeanor comical.

Port Gati, being near the sea, boasted excellent seafood. The oysters and other shellfish were not only tastier than most restaurants in Trier, but also considerably cheaper. Lumian sipped his brewed apple cider, enjoying the unique local flavors.

With Ludwig’s impressive appetite, the eight-person dinner soon ended, leaving only clean plates and bones behind.

Lumian and Lugano, despite not being small eaters themselves, found themselves dwarfed by Ludwig’s consumption despite eating two servings each. This was especially impressive considering he’d already devoured afternoon tea and dessert earlier.

I don’t see you visiting the washroom often… Where does all the food go? Do you have a bottomless pit for a stomach? Lumian mused, sizing Ludwig up. He stood up and turned to Lugano.

“I’m feeling for a drink. Want to join me at the ship’s bar?”

“I didn’t catch a wink last night. Planned to hit the hay early today.” Lugano couldn’t wrap his head around his employer’s boundless energy. Despite a sleepless night and a full day of travel, Lumian buzzed with life, ready to hit the bar.

Could it be because his Sequence is higher?

The kid with the odd appetite looks pretty charged too…

Lumian didn’t extend an invite to the translator. After leaving a late-night snack for Ludwig, he swapped into a plain dark brown jacket and left the room, heading for the first-class bar.

The bar oozed elegance, filled with the soft tunes of a small band. Sparse patrons scattered around, soaking in the quiet atmosphere.

Lumian scanned the scene for a moment from the entrance, then shook his head and exited.

He descended the stairs to the deck, slipping into the bar serving third-class cabins and the regular crew.

A chaos of noise—shouts, cheers, claps, and random singing—saturated the air, echoing around Lumian.

He instantly felt a sense of homecoming. A wave of ease washed over him, and every cell in his body kicked up a notch.

That’s more like it… A seasoned regular at the Ol’ Tavern from a young age, Lumian swayed a bit as he edged up to the bar counter.

“A glass of La Fée Verte.” He thumped the wooden surface.

The bartender, a young man with Feynapotter features, greeted Lumian. His face was slim, adorned with black hair, eyes, and distinct contours. His slightly yellowish skin highlighted his appealing facial features.

“Alright, 10 licks,” the bartender replied in Intisian, his foreign accent apparent.

The ship’s prices trumps even those in Trier… As Lumian counted out the coins, he noticed the bartender divert his attention and engage with sincerity and enthusiasm.

“Madame, what would you like to drink?”

“A glass of cherry wine,” a lady in a thick yellow dress responded, showcasing a pretty face and light green eyes.

“Alright!” The bartender, not seeking payment upfront, prepared to serve the lady.

“I was here first,” Lumian reminded the bartender with a smile.

Without hesitation, the bartender replied, “This is such a beautiful and dazzling lady. My heart tells me to serve her first.”

Oh, he’s truly from Feynapotter… Lumian didn’t get upset. Instead, it felt like he was watching a circus act.

Feynapotterians, with their romantic nature and relentless pursuit of love, placed their faith in Earth Mother, emphasizing the importance of women. Men in this kingdom would praise any woman they encountered, openly pursuing those they fancied.

Aurore had once mentioned that Feynapotter’s men were masters of country romance. Despite their mushiness and overt sincerity, they didn’t come off as cheesy; rather, they exuded a different kind of elegance.

In comparison, the romantic Intisians seemed lacking.

However, influenced by tradition and faith, most Feynapotterians placed great importance on family, reproduction, and children, preferring settled family lives. Unless entering marriage without coercion, they were akin to the conservative Loenese, finding it challenging to accept extramarital affairs.

While exceptions existed, even in the most conservative Loen Kingdom, the prevalence of adultery wasn’t as exaggerated or common as in Intis. Many believed that love didn’t necessarily thrive within the confines of marriage.

After the lady settled her tab and departed with the cherry wine, the bartender served Lumian La Fée Verte, garnishing it with a mint leaf.

He remarked without a trace of guilt, “My grandmother always said to give special treatment to every lady, especially the beautiful ones.”

“I get it.” Lumian slipped back into his role as a regular at Ol’ Tavern. Sipping his absinthe, he concocted a tale. “I once had numerous beautiful companions, even more stunning than the last lady. Unfortunately, being just one person, I couldn’t marry them all simultaneously…”

The bartender suddenly felt a camaraderie.

“I often feel the same regrets. There are too many beautiful women in this world, and I’m just one person.”

“What’s your name?”

“Louis, just call me Louis.” Lumian provided his alias.

His current identity was Louis Berry.

“I’m Francesco,” the bartender shared with Lumian.

The familiar setting, the customary boasting, and the vibrant ambiance left Lumian feeling a bit tipsy, despite not imbibing much.

If not for the mysticism catastrophe, if Aurore were still alive, if he’d already entered university with no other concerns, wouldn’t it be nice to just unwind at a bar?

Sea travelers couldn’t help but discuss pirates. Bartender Francesco informed Lumian, “With the widespread use of ironclad warship technology on merchant vessels, it’s become tough for pirates. Their sailboats can’t match these iron-skinned monsters cruising at 16 to 17 knots. They can’t plunder them even if they tried!”

Lowering his voice, Francesco continued, “Pirates’ go-to strategy now is sending individuals disguised as passengers to board ships from different ports. Once they hit a designated area in the sea, they create internal chaos, gaining initial control and allowing a nearby pirate ship to close in.”

“Is that so?” Lumian inquired with interest. “Any guesses on who might be an undercover pirate on this ship?”

Francesco was taken aback.

“It’s just the first day. How can I tell?”

Lumian smiled, teasing, “Ever been through something like this before?”

[1] From “Le Tour De France Gourmand”

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Chapter 511 - 511 Warning

511 Warning

“Thank you, Earth Mother. They only ransacked the cabins one by one, and as long as we didn’t resist, they left us unharmed. Naturally, the beautiful ladies and gentlemen were excluded. You can’t expect pirates to have high moral standards.”

Lumian took a sip of mint-flavored absinthe, a smile playing on his lips.

“Aren’t they worried that there might be someone like the adventurer Gehrman Sparrow among the passengers? What if they encounter a powerhouse unwilling to part with their money and ready to use force?”

Francesco was caught off guard by Lumian’s question.

After a pause, he replied, “Being a pirate involves higher risks, doesn’t it?”

“That does make sense,” Lumian nodded in agreement.

Francesco went on, “Many merchant ships nowadays hire retired navy personnel, maritime adventurers, and professional mercenaries for protection. They’re tough and can handle onboard disturbances. Plus, they make pirates think twice, leaving room for negotiation.

“There was a similar incident on a merchant ship before. Pirates had the upper hand, took control, but hesitated to take on a sailor team led by adventurers. They opted for negotiations, demanded a protection fee, and withdrew without looting the cabins.”

Lumian chuckled.

“If I were a pirate, I’d start a security company in Port Gati, offering knowledgeable maritime mercenaries. If ships hire them, I’d earn some fees. If not, well, then it’s time for a good old-fashioned plunder. Either way, I’d make a profit.”

Francesco eyed the black-haired, green-eyed man in his twenties with surprise and muttered,

“Don’t tell me you’re an undercover pirate? The maritime factions are in chaos. Can your subordinates protect those who hire you from other pirates? Sigh, that’s why I’ve never liked the sea. Stepping on the ground gives me a greater sense of security.

“Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!”

A pure Feynapotterian who believes in Earth Mother… Lumian smiled and asked, “If you don’t like the sea, why are you still working as a bartender on the ship?”

Francesco’s expression gradually became animated.

“Don’t you find it romantic to have an independent kingdom, one that can hardly contact the outside world, floating out at sea? When you meet a beautiful lady here, you’ll feel that only the two of you are left in the entire world. You can only rely on each other.”

Your ultimate goal is to find a romantic encounter? Sometimes, Lumian found it hard to comprehend the Feynapotterians and some Trieriens who resembled them.

At that moment, Francesco gestured towards a round table.

“That’s Philip, the security supervisor of the Flying Bird. He claims to be a retired officer of the Fog Sea fleet. He destroyed numerous pirate ships with his cannons and personally captured many pirates with wanted posters.”

A group of men and women gathered around a round table to the side. In their midst was a middle-aged man with short light-gold hair, light-blue eyes, and a weathered face. Despite his appearance, he didn’t exude seriousness or formality.

“I’ll tell you this, if we ever encounter a formidable pirate, don’t fret. I know them, and I have a certain level of friendship with them. At the very least, I can negotiate…

“Haha, don’t ask why naval officers have ties to great pirates. There are many things at sea you don’t understand, and it’s best not to delve into them…”

The men and women surrounding Philip listened attentively, occasionally expressing surprise at the mention of influential figures or when he narrated thrilling adventure stories.

At some point, Philip’s left hand had wrapped around a girl’s waist, and she didn’t make any attempt to escape. Instead, she wore a shy expression.

Lumian averted his gaze and asked bartender Francesco, “Does he really know so many great pirates? Is he genuinely a retired officer of the Fog Sea fleet?”

Having finished wiping a cup, Francesco spread his hands and said, “Who knows? However, since he took over as the Flying Bird’s security supervisor, we haven’t faced any pirate attacks during our five trips out to sea in the past few months. I don’t know if it’s luck or if he truly knows many pirates and can spot spies at a glance, giving them an advanced warning.”

In the Five Seas, where pirates are a constant threat, the likelihood of avoiding encounters on five consecutive long-distance voyages is slim… Lumian turned his

body again, scrutinizing Philip, whose skin bore the rough, red, and weathered marks of a seasoned mariner.

It was challenging to discern if this person was a Beyonder, let alone determine his Sequence. However, Lumian could deduce from the physical details that he had spent considerable time at sea.

Lumian focused and briefly observed Philip's luck.

It carried a hint of blood.

There's a possibility of combat and injuries in the future, but it won't endanger his life… Lumian frowned, finishing the absinthe in his hand and requesting another glass of Lanti Proof.

Before long, Philip left the bar with the girl still wrapped around his waist, his face flushed.

Lumian clicked his tongue and shook his head.

"You Intisians."

After a while, rhythmic music filled the bar. Many customers stood up and rushed to the empty space in the middle to dance.

Lumian held the liquor, swaying gently to the rhythm, appearing lost in thought.

Since discovering that the evil god's bestowed beings were up to no good, he hadn't felt this relaxed in a long time.

The Hostel plan was now in the past. The investigation of April Fool's key members could only commence upon reaching Port Santa.

This was a rare vacation.

Estimating that it was time for Ludwig's second late-night snack, Lumian set down his glass and left the bar on the deck.

As Lumian made his way back to the first-class cabin, he suddenly whispered, "Temiboros, is there any way to identify Beyonders on the ship and the passengers disguised as pirates? I want to visit them one by one, warn them to behave, and not interfere with my enjoyment of the journey."

If anyone refused to heed the warning, 007 could assist in collecting the bounty. The Beyonder characteristics they produced could also be exchanged for money!

Termiboros's majestic voice echoed in Lumian's ears.

Without waiting for Lumian's response, the sealed Angel added, "With Alista Tudor's lingering aura and the slight corruption of 0-01, there's a high chance that you'll trigger a calamity if you really warn those people."

Does that mean I'm the greatest calamity and just need to take care of myself? Lumian, who had hoped to reorganize the Flying Bird's dark world and ensure a pleasant journey, understood Termiboros's meaning. He had no choice but to give up.

At that moment, the Flying Bird had fallen into a deep slumber. Lumian walked across the solid floor, the faint creaks and muffled cries echoing around him.

Somewhere within the ship, a woman wept in heartbreaking sobs.

Lumian was no stranger to such despair. He'd often heard Miss Ethans, the object of Charlie's admiration at Auberge du Coq Doré, cry in similar anguish.

There are people who suffer everywhere. Sad people… Lumian, influenced by his writer sister, possessed a touch of the artistic spirit.

Shaking his head, he returned to Room 5, his first-class cabin.

Lugano had already retired to the servants' quarters, while Ludwig, clad in pajamas and a nightcap, awaited his late-night snack.

Lumian sighed and retrieved the easily preserved food from his Traveler's Bag, grateful he'd restocked at Port Gati.

He calculated the cost of Ludwig's daily meals—100 verl d'or, translating to almost 40,000 verl d'or annually. A wave of vexation washed over him. At this rate, Ludwig would deplete his savings within two years.

He couldn't help but wonder if Baron Brignais had breathed a sigh of relief upon confirming Ludwig's "disappearance."

After settling the two midnight meals, Lumian quickly washed and settled into the master bedroom.

As the gentle sway of the ship lulled him, his mind drifted off to sleep.

Lumian woke up at 6 a.m., feeling refreshed.

The dining table was bare, Ludwig and Lugano still asleep.

He pushed open the window and stretched, inhaling the crisp morning air.

Just before seven, the doorbell rang.

My breakfast was scheduled to arrive at 8:30 a.m…. Lumian opened the door and found Philip, the Flying Bird's security supervisor with his blond hair, blue eyes, and weathered face, standing before him.

Philip looked grim, a stark contrast to the jovial man he'd been at the bar the previous night.

“I’ve confirmed that your identification documents are fake.”

How did he confirm it? Why did he specially check our identification? Lumian didn’t feel that anything about them stood out after they boarded the ship.

Suppressing his confusion, he frowned and asked, “Are you attempting to extort us?”

Philip glanced at the living room and said solemnly, “I don’t care who you were or what you plan to do. Just behave yourselves during your stay on the Flying Bird. Enjoy the journey, don’t cause any trouble, and we’ll all be fine.”

He’s really confirming if we are problematic… How did this guy do it? He’s quite capable. He’s not as frivolous and simple as he seems… Lumian replied calmly, not giving in, “I’m afraid I don’t understand. Perhaps there’s a misunderstanding?”

Philip locked eyes with him for a long moment.

“As long as you understand what I’m saying,” he finally replied before turning and walking away.

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Chapter 512 - 512 Strange Pirate Ship

512 Strange Pirate Ship

This guy was competent, he had to admit. Gone was the frivolous, greasy, and undisciplined facade he'd displayed at the bar the night before.

It was a common trait among many Intisian men, Lumian observed. When not engaged in demanding work and surrounded by attractive women, they turned into preening peacocks, desperate to display their prowess. Becoming a Beyonder didn't change that fundamental nature.

Demonesses thrived in Intis, especially in Trier. This wasn't just due to the city's underground allure; there was a deeper, more harmonious connection with the society at large.

Lumian wasn't offended by Philip's warning, nor did he take it personally.

He'd planned to enjoy the voyage over the next few days, even considered lending a hand in maintaining order on the ship, becoming a shadow inquisitor of sorts.

But now, his primary concern shifted to how Philip had unmasked their true identities.

Lumian had meticulously combed through Aurore's grimoire, studying the abilities of Low-Sequence Beyonders across 22 pathways, and supplemented his knowledge with information gleaned from various sources over the past months. From this, he formed a preliminary hypothesis.

Philip is likely a Beyonder of one of three pathways—Spectator, Reader, or Arbiter.

One excels at observing minute details and reading people's true thoughts. Another is a master of deduction, their Sequence 7 even being called "Detective." They can detect abnormalities from the most subtle clues. The third, at Sequence 8 Public Security Officer, wields extraordinary control within their jurisdiction, allowing them to sense and trace anomalies…

Given that we haven't spoken directly with Philip before, I can eliminate the Spectator option. Besides, Spectators aren't typically chosen as security supervisors, it's not their forte…

After discovering that there was a problem with us through his abilities and that our origins were unclear, Philip likely checked copies of our identification and sent telegrams to the issuing authorities. And he received confirmation that these

three people didn't exist?

This explains the delay in his warning. He'd waited for the investigation and response before making his move.

This also implies he has a network of helpers across different regions, receives information and feedback, and possesses extensive connections.

Doing this alone wouldn't be possible. He has an organization backing him, something more official, perhaps? He did claim to be a retired officer of the Fog Sea Fleet, after all…

Such a person is indeed well-suited to lead the security on a heavily armed merchant ship like this.

Lumian turned away and closed the door, a wave of relief washing over him.

With such a capable security supervisor at the helm, issuing discrete warnings to potential threats, the journey ahead promised to be relatively safe.

Lumian spent the morning in the comfort of his first-class cabin, Cabin 5, indulging in a leisurely study of Highlander and breaking up his reading with bouts of exercise. Meanwhile, Ludwig, after breakfast, had begged Lugano to take him on a tour of the ship, spending over an hour on deck playing like a genuine child.

Lumian, however, suspected the true purpose of this excursion was to meticulously survey the location and condition of the ship's food reserves.

From the corner of his eye, he caught sight of Philip, back to his usual casual demeanor. He was now entangled with the girl from the previous night at the bow of the ship, whispering sweet nothings and laughing, the picture of a smitten couple.

After leaving Trier, he had adjusted his usual phrases to better reflect reality.

Philip and the girl continued their stroll along the deck, their laughter echoing through the air.

With the enhanced hearing of a Hunter, Lumian had no trouble making out the girl's name—Gozia. Though not conventionally beautiful, she exuded a youthful vibrancy that was undeniable.

Lumian watched as Philip's gaze darted beyond the ship's railing, his face hardening for a brief moment.

Following the security supervisor's line of sight, Lumian scanned the horizon, spotting a colossal shadow lurking beneath the undulating waves!

It disappeared as quickly as it appeared, swallowed by the surging sea.

Smaller than the Flying Bird, but far larger than any sea creature… Giant fish, or something more? Lumian mused, a spark of excitement igniting within him.

“My dear, what has captured your attention?” Gozia’s voice broke through Philip’s reverie.

“My sweetheart, just thinking about which first-class restaurant I’ll treat you to later,” Philip replied nonchalantly.

Suddenly, a thin veil of fog crept upwards from the sea, obscuring the sun and dimming the surrounding environment.

The passengers and crew on deck remained unfazed, accustomed to such sudden weather changes in the Fog Sea. Although less intense than the Berserk Sea, the unpredictable nature of the region was ever-present.

As Gozia reveled in the first foggy day of their journey, Philip discreetly raised his right arm, gesturing towards the spot where the shadow had vanished.

He doesn’t think it’s a passing giant fish… Lumian admired the sea ahead with interest. He noticed several crew members ending their breaks and taking their positions, including the gunners.

The peaceful atmosphere was shattered by a loud splash as a monstrous iron-black behemoth surfaced from the depths.

It was a peculiar-looking “ship.”

It was covered in a layer of metal, with only thin pipes resembling snail eyes protruding from its hull.

As seawater cascaded off its sides, the upper half of the strange vessel split open, revealing a fearsome array of cannons and masts rising from within, creating a wide deck.

Dozens, perhaps even hundreds of pirates armed with firearms and swords were on the deck, filling the air with their intimidating cries.

A white sail unfurled automatically, right to the top of the mast.

Wow… Lumian marveled inwardly.

He had never seen such a magical vessel before, a vessel that could disappear and reappear from the depths of the sea.

Philip’s expression grew increasingly grave.

Beside him, Gozia froze, her eyes wide with terror as she instinctively huddled closer to her lover.

“Only one man commands such undersea vessels,” Philip replied, his voice devoid of its usual frivolity and heavy with grim certainty. “Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine. Judging by the size of this vessel, it’s not his flagship, the Newins. It’s the Black Octopus, commanded by his most trusted subordinate, Bone Splitter Basil.”

Gozia’s vision swam, and she nearly fainted.

The night before, during their conversation, Philip had mentioned the infamous maritime kings and pirate admirals who ruled the Five Seas. Among them, Howl Constantine, who had recently risen to the rank of Admiral, was shrouded in mystery.

Legend whispered of his monstrous heritage, claiming he possessed the blood of sea monsters. He had even ventured into the ruins of a sunken city, recovering the relics of ancient alchemists: two stealth boats capable of navigating the depths of the ocean unseen.

Inspired by these vessels, the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery had attempted to develop their own undersea fleet. However, they failed to mass produce them. Due to the reliance on higher Sequence Beyonders, only one or two of these vessels could be assigned to each Intisian fleet, each serving specialized functions.

Of Admiral Deep Sea’s two undersea vessels, the first, the Newins, was a behemoth rivaling the Flying Bird in size. Inspired by a renowned maritime treasure legend, it served as Howl Constantine’s flagship. The second, the Black Octopus, which had just emerged from the depths, was entrusted to his most trusted subordinate, Bone Splitter Basil.

He was an equally formidable figure, known for his cold-blooded brutality and ruthless tactics. He took pleasure in torturing his captives, and the bounty on his head, far exceeding that of most non-Admiral pirates, stood at a staggering 250,000 verl d’or.

The revelation of the Black Octopus and Bone Splitter Basil plunged Gozia into a pit of despair.

How could a mere armed merchant ship like the Flying Bird possibly stand against such notorious pirates from the Five Seas?

What horrors awaited them under Bone Splitter Basil’s reign of terror?

Philip, however, had no time for his new lover’s distress. His full attention was focused on the unfolding spectacle of the Black Octopus and its menacing cannons, ready to unleash their fury at any moment.

Standing a short distance away, Lumian felt a thrill coursing through his veins when he heard the name Bone Splitter Basil, the strongest subordinate to Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine. This was not nervousness, but the exhilarating

feeling from catching a whiff of iron and blood.

This was one of the Hunters' belligerence.

Even after fully digesting the potions, a Beyonder would still be affected by them.

Lumian's emerald eyes, sharp as an eagle's, locked onto the bizarre iron-

black ship as he formulated his next move.

Once Bone Splitter Basil emerged and the two vessels closed the distance, Lumian planned to "teleport" behind the infamous pirate and unleash the Spell of Harrumph.

If the Spell of Harrumph's effect proved insufficient and failed to incapacitate Basil, Lumian would don his Flog boxing gloves, instill a specific desire within his opponent, and "teleport" again, creating greater distance before activating the Symphony of Hatred, amplifying the instilled desire to a maddening degree.

With Bone Splitter Basil severely wounded and momentarily incapacitated, Lumian would seize the opportunity to unleash his full Hunter arsenal, striking the enemy down with devastating blows.

To prevent interference from the surrounding pirates, he could potentially create a Bottle of Fiction and isolate Bone Splitter Basil for a one-on-one duel…

A complex plan, complete with contingency measures, raced through Lumian's mind, causing a slight tremor in his body, as if anticipating the thrill of the coming battle.

Just as the tension reached a peak and a naval confrontation seemed imminent, the pirates aboard the Black Octopus turned as one, their eyes fixed in shock upon the stairs leading deeper into the vessel.

A few seconds later, the bizarre iron-black ship made an abrupt turn, altering its course and steering away from the Flying Bird.

With swift precision, the exposed sections of the Black Octopus retracted, sealing its interior once more.

In the eyes of Lumian and the others, the Black Octopus rapidly distanced itself, diving back into the depths of the foggy sea.

In the blink of an eye, it transformed into a mere shadow, disappearing completely.

"E-escaped?" Uttering the word after a long moment of dazed silence, Gozia turned to her lover, her voice filled with surprise and confusion.

Bone Splitter Basil and his Black Octopus were simply leaving?

Without a fight, without plundering?

Philip, himself bewildered, stared at the spot where the Black Octopus had vanished, forcing a smile onto his face.

“Didn’t I tell you that I know many great pirates?”

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Chapter 513 - 513 Worry

513 Worry

Have they escaped? Lumian's lips twitched. The Black Octopus's abrupt change of course and sudden dive left him speechless.

The maneuver caught him off guard, leaving him frozen for a critical moment.

This incredible underwater ship, commanded by a great pirate with a massive bounty, simply turned tail and fled without even firing a single cannon?

How could one be a pirate with such puny guts?

Bone Splitter Basil? With a bounty of 250,000 verl d'or and a fearsome reputation? Don't even think about showing your face on the high seas again!

Lumian cursed under his breath, then frowned thoughtfully. Why had Bone Splitter Basil fled without revealing himself?

I could understand if it was the Blood Emperor's aura I activated that made you run so fast, but why now?

It couldn't be that he targeted the wrong ship, did he? The Flying Bird isn't the merchant vessel he wanted to plunder, so he was rushing to corner his real prey?

Did he somehow sense that hijacking this ship would lead to disaster?

If he truly possessed the power of divination or prophecy, they would have known not to come. He wouldn't have had to embarrass himself in front of the crew and passengers, only to turn back and drift aimlessly…

Danger Premonition? A Hunter's danger intuition wouldn't react so strongly until it's face-to-face with the threat…

Then it hit him. A Sequence that had him wary for months: Sequence 6 Devil of the Criminal pathway!

Beyonders at this Sequence possessed a unique ability called "Malicious Perception."

If someone within their range intended to cause them lethal harm and acted on it within a specific timeframe, they could sense the source of the danger and identify their attacker.

Bone Splitter Basil… a Devil? His title and reputation certainly fit…

I had just formulated a hunting plan for him, intending to "teleport" over after confirming the situation. Did he sense my malice and confirm the extent of the danger before swiftly deciding to escape?

Hey, you're a Devil. Are you running away without a fight? I'm not even confident in defeating a Devil. Besides, you're on your alchemical boat with a large number of subordinates around you. You probably don't lack mystical items. Do you have to be so cowardly?

The plan I envisioned had a high success rate, so much so that Basil's ability to sense danger exceeded his endurance. Therefore, he didn't take the risk and chose the most effective and safest response—escape? The more Lumian pondered, the more he felt that this guess was close to the truth.

This amused him as well.

Hunters might not be the ones who charged forward to fight from the beginning. They might even be the last to appear and be responsible for harvesting.

Lumian suspected that Basil might not be able to sense the specific plan. It was only because he had the Angel of Inevitability, the Blood Emperor's aura, Mr. Fool's seal, and 0-01's mild corruption, regardless of whether they were powerful or not, that they combined with a feasible plan and clear malice. It strongly agitated the Bone Splitter, making him feel that the impending danger was beyond his ability to handle. Hence, the scene just now.

Are all Devils so timid? Lumian cursed silently and left the deck in disappointment, returning to Room 5 of the first-class cabin.

At that moment, the exclusive attendant had arrived with lunch. Ludwig focused on the delicacies, while Lugano lingered by the window, his face filled with excitement.

Upon seeing Lumian's return, the Doctor exclaimed excitedly, "Just now, a great pirate appeared—Bone Splitter Basil, Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine's most formidable captain. He even operates the Black Octopus. H-have you heard of the Black Octopus? It's a mystical ship that can dive to the seabed!"

"I heard it from someone at the bar last night," Lumian replied honestly.

Prior to this, he didn't know much about Admiral Deep Sea and his pirate crew. All he knew was that there was such a pirate admiral. After all, Howl Constantine was quite mysterious and rarely appeared in newspapers and magazines that recorded sea stories. His only appearance in The Adventurer series was his title and name, giving him a background without any plot lines.

Lugano didn't hide his emotions.

“I witnessed the mystical pirate ship with my own eyes. It truly surfaced from the seabed and can bloom like a flower!

“I thought we’d clash with the Bone Splitter and use your teleportation abilities to escape. To my surprise, Black Octopus chose to leave after observing for just over ten seconds.”

Over ten seconds? Aren’t you looking down on Bone Splitters? It was a few seconds! Lumian retorted inwardly.

Lugano continued, “When I chatted with a few sailors this morning, they told me that the Flying Bird’s security supervisor is a formidable retired officer who knows many great pirates. I thought they were boasting, but from the looks of it, that security supervisor isn’t simple. It’s really possible that he has ties to many great pirates. That’s why Bone Splitter Basil didn’t plunder the Flying Bird!”

“That’s right, that’s right,” Lumian echoed.

Rip… Ludwig tore off the oily skin and meat from a duck leg.

Lumian glanced at the boy, who was engrossed in his food, and suddenly had a new idea.

Could the malice and danger that Bone Splitter Basil sensed be more than one? Could it not be solely from me?

Ludwig might have swallowed hard upon hearing the word “bone dismantling”…

However, even though this walking bottomless stomach when compared to me appears high-ranking, he lacks the corresponding abilities…

…

To celebrate the fact that the Flying Bird hadn’t been plundered by the Black Octopus, the captain hosted a party on the deck in the evening, featuring clowns, magicians, and beast tamers. He treated everyone to three glasses of beer.

Late at night, the third-class bar bustled with activity. Philip became the center of attention, surrounded by nearly all the patrons. They took turns praising him and treating him to drinks.

They were all grateful to the security supervisor for using his friendship with Bone Splitter Basil to persuade the great pirate to leave and prevent the passengers of the Flying Bird from suffering.

Lumian, seated at the bar counter and engaged in conversation with bartender Francesco, savored the Lanti Proof. His gaze casually swept across Philip’s face, and he noticed a hint of seriousness and worry beneath the blond-haired, blue-eyed middle-aged man’s frivolous smile.

In other words, he wasn't that happy.

After nearly an hour, Philip squeezed out of the drunken crowd and sat beside Lumian with his lover, Gozia.

He knocked on the table and ordered a glass of golden beer. Casually, he said, "You actually enjoy drinking in such a rowdy place."

"The girls here are more enthusiastic than in first class." Lumian could roughly guess Philip's motive for coming, but he didn't inquire further.

Philip chuckled. "That's true."

Casually, he inquired, "What did you do when the Black Octopus arrived?"

"Don't you remember? I wasn't far from you. Don't you know what I did?" Lumian replied candidly.

Philip nodded slightly and didn't press further.

Lumian took a sip of liquor and asked with a smile, "Do you think there's a huge problem on the ship that scared off that little troublemaker?"

Philip turned his head and glanced at Lumian, not too surprised that he had made such a connection.

"What are you two talking about?" The tipsy Gozia couldn't quite grasp the conversation between the two men.

It was as if they were speaking in riddles.

"That's the most logical explanation I can come up with," Philip replied, ignoring his lover's question.

Lumian asked with interest, "Who do you think is suspicious?"

From yesterday afternoon to noon today, the security supervisor must have warned many people.

Philip set down his beer mug and massaged his temples.

After some thought, he smiled. "I wanted to tell you, but I don't think that's necessary now."

"Why?" Lumian inquired curiously.

Philip took another sip of his beer and chuckled.

"As long as that huge problem doesn't erupt on the ship, it won't be a problem for me.

“As you can see, it hasn’t revealed itself and is quietly hiding. This means that it might just want to reach the archipelago or Port Santa without a hitch.”

At this point, Philip sighed and said with experience, “Many times, when you see an abnormality, there’s no need to care or figure out the truth. Pretending not to notice and patiently waiting for the abnormality to leave is the best choice.

“The abnormality that didn’t erupt isn’t abnormal. Your investigation and investigation might agitate it, escalating the problem and causing the catastrophe to truly descend.

“As long as that abnormality doesn’t truly harm us, try your best to maintain reverence and avoid stimulation. That’s one of the key reasons why I’ve been able to survive at sea until now.”

Lumian nodded gently and said, “A relative of mine once mentioned that in certain events, those who can’t see, hear, speak, or smell are more likely to survive.”

Philip smiled and extended his right hand.

“I’m glad you share that understanding.”

This was his true motive for coming to talk to Lumian. He wanted Lumian, who was using a fake identity, not to be curious and try to figure out the hidden trouble on the ship.

That might implicate the entire ship!

Understanding Philip’s meaning, Lumian couldn’t help but raise his eyebrows.

Does this mean there are other troubles on the ship?

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Chapter 514 - 514 Huge Wave

514 Huge Wave

Lumian took a moment to consider. He didn't think there was any real danger.

Philip's concern was based on Bone Splitter Basil's reaction, which only hinted at a potential problem on the ship. While Philip knew which passengers and crew members were suspicious, he couldn't pinpoint the real source of the trouble. He wasn't even sure if he was right, and wouldn't dare to be certain. Therefore, his suspect might not be the actual issue.

In other words, it was more likely that the real problem was actually sitting right beside him: Lumian and his new godson, Ludwig. However, Philip wasn't aware of this, and by excluding them, would mistakenly focus on other suspects.

Apart from Ludwig and me, whether there are other serious problems or not, Philip is right, Lumian thought, letting out a soft sigh. Before any major troubles surface, it's best not to investigate or provoke them. We'll pretend not to see, hear, or speak, and wait for them to reach their destination and leave the Flying Bird…

Of course, this depends on the situation remaining stable. If any abnormalities arise, we'd have to find a way to resolve them immediately. Sometimes, pretending not to see things doesn't prevent them from worsening. The Cordu catastrophe is a gruesome reminder of that… Lumian thought and sighed softly.

He turned around and extended his hand, briefly shaking Philip's with a smile.

"I'm glad we reached an agreement."

Philip breathed a sigh of relief, retracted his right hand, and downed his golden malt beer.

He had been worried that someone like Louis Berry, who used a fake identity and was suspected of being a criminal, would be stubborn and adventurous. He was concerned that Louis wouldn't listen to reason and would insist on uncovering the "huge problem" that scared off the Black Octopus.

Philip felt no sympathy for someone who might die because of their own foolishness, but he didn't want them to endanger everyone else.

Thankfully, Louis Berry seemed like someone who could be reasoned with.

As Philip drained his beer, he kept assuring himself:

The Fog Sea Archipelago wasn't far from the Republic. In fact, its proximity was why Intis had chosen it as its first overseas colony. The Flying Bird wouldn't need to stop at other ports for supplies on its journey, allowing it to arrive directly.

Assuming the weather remained calm, the Flying Bird should dock in Farim, the capital of the Fog Sea Archipelago, by the following evening. If they encountered bad weather, they might need to slow down, change course, or seek refuge in another port. The latest they could arrive would be noon the day after tomorrow.

Perhaps that troublesome problem would disembark in Port Farim?

Even if something was brewing beneath the surface, it wouldn't fully erupt in just a day or two.

Endure, and it would be over!

Reassured, Philip—hugging his lover, Gozia—rose from his barstool and left the bustling bar.

Lumian continued sipping his Lanti Proof, seemingly unfazed.

With a smile, he turned to the bartender, Francesco, and remarked, "I've heard that many Feynapotterians are homesick. Even when they have to leave for work, they often return home, write letters, or send telegrams. You, however, chose to work overseas, on a ship that makes it difficult to stay in touch with the outside world."

Francesco raised his hand and gestured. "While I love my family dearly, families like ours, with generations living together, often face various problems and conflicts. My grandmother, a wise woman, manages us well, but it can be stifling for the younger generation. There are too many elders eager to share their life experiences.

"Furthermore, my home is in Port Santa. The Flying Bird docks there almost every month. So, for me, this job is both work and a trip home."

It's just like the book that described Feynapotterian customs. Feynapotterians enjoy living in large families spanning multiple generations. And in such families, the most senior woman who has given birth becomes the natural matriarch, controlling the entire family's affairs, regardless of whether her husband is alive. In a religious sense, such a woman is considered the embodiment of Earth Mother within the family… His chat with Bartender Francesco wasn't purely for relaxation. He had two goals: Firstly, he wanted to understand the passengers better through Francesco's eyes. His final destination was Port Santa, which was five to six days away. Paying attention to the various details of life on the Flying Bird was crucial. Secondly, he wanted to verify the information in his books and gain a grasp of local customs in the Feynapotter Kingdom. Missing out on important knowledge could lead him to misinterpret situations in Port Santa.

…

The night passed peacefully, save for a child waking up twice to eat, the rhythmic chewing noises hardly disturbing Lumian's sleep. The gentle rocking of the ship and the waves outside his window created a lulling atmosphere.

Just when he thought the Flying Bird would smoothly reach Port Farim, the capital of the Fog Sea Archipelago, by evening, the weather took a sudden turn.

The sea, previously veiled in a thin fog, began to seethe. Giant waves, like towering mountains, rose and fell in rapid succession.

The Flying Bird bobbed precariously on the waves, its air of colossal power replaced by vulnerability.

Now, it was a mere leaf tossed between the sky and the sea, a toy in the hands of a giant. Tiny and fragile, it seemed ready to capsize at any moment.

Oddly, the massive waves were not accompanied by darkness or torrential rain. Instead, the howling wind dispersed the fog above, revealing a clear azure sky.

A sailor scrambled down from the observation deck and, holding his telescope to Philip, shouted, "Boss, this wave isn't right!

"Only our area has waves this big! Everywhere else is calm!

"There's no rain here either!"

Philip, holding onto Gozia who trembled pale from the force of the elements, instinctively furrowed his brow.

Abnormal waves?

Had that "major problem" caused them?

No sooner had the thought crossed his mind than the Flying Bird was flung into the air by a monstrous wave, only to be slammed onto another.

Terrifying jolts and tremors reverberated through the air, eliciting screams of fear from many passengers.

They sensed the Flying Bird teetering on the brink of capsizing, a shipwreck imminent.

In first-class cabin number 5, Lugano stared calmly out the window, gripping the frame as the dining table slid across the room with the force of the storm.

He knew that if the Flying Bird couldn't withstand the tempest, Lumian Lee would undoubtedly "teleport" him and Ludwig to safety in Port Farim.

Lumian, gazing at the strangely calm azure sea beyond the monstrous waves, sensed something amiss.

He wasted no time, retrieving the Mystery Prying Glasses from his Traveler's Bag, hoping to uncover the hidden cause of this disaster.

As the brown, gold-rimmed glasses settled on the bridge of his nose, a familiar dizziness washed over him. He saw a chaotic montage of scenes around him unfold.

On deck, a tidal wave surged, tossing Philip. Clutching a rope in desperation, he descended rapidly with Gozia. He instinctively positioned himself below her, shielding his new lover from the fall. He landed with a heavy thud, the rope burning a gash into his palm, drawing blood.

Chaos reigned in the dining hall as plates, knives, and forks flew through the air; customers were flung around.

In one room, a blurry figure of a woman sat by the window, sobbing uncontrollably.

The boiler chamber was a scene of disarray, scattered coal littering the floor. Beneath it crawled a horrifying horde of creatures resembling seashells.

And beneath the deceptively calm azure surface, a peculiar fish gazed up at the beleaguered Flying Bird!

Its size rivaled that of a shark, its grayish-black body devoid of scales, replaced instead by numerous, pulsing meatballs. These strange orbs shimmered with an interconnected, faint starlight, forming cryptic symbols. It sported a pair of eyes on each side of its head, and its gaping maw was as sharp as a flagpole.

Surrounding this strange fish and numerous similar fish seemed to form a school.

With a sharp gasp, Lumian ripped off the Mystery Prying Glasses and stuffed them back into his Traveler's Bag, his chest heaving.

He suspected the strange fish were behind the violent waves, though it was unclear if the wind was a consequence of the upheaval or a separate cause.

Knowing the strange fish were submerged, Lumian discarded the idea of using a massive fireball to guide the Flying Bird's cannons towards them.

Instead, he activated the black mark on his right shoulder and "teleported" himself to the nearby patch of sea he had just witnessed.

As he did so, he retrieved the blackened bone flute adorned with dark-red holes.

General Philip's Symphony of Hatred!

Lumian materialized mid-air and, while descending, brought the bone flute to his lips.

He had learned the flute from shepherds during his time in Cordu, and over the past few days, he had been diligently practicing and refining his skills. Now, he began to play a melodious tune, one filled with a longing for home.

It was a favorite melody among the wandering shepherds.

The muffled explosions of fireballs churned the water, slowing Lumian's descent. But amidst his melody, a new tune, one that seemed to emanate from the depths of destiny itself, pierced through the seawater and reached the "ears" of the strange fish and their kind below.

Suddenly, the strange fish froze. A mountain-like wave descended, but no new ones followed.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The smaller fish surrounding the strange fish exploded from their heads, turning on their own kind in a frenzy. Others simply died and floated to the surface.

Lumian's descent accelerated as his feet, legs, and body submerged into the icy sea.

He continued playing the shepherds' longing melody, feeling the seawater reach his neck and threatening to engulf his mouth.

The next moment, dark-red blood oozed from the four eyes and multiple bumps on the shark-sized fish.

The terrifying waves subsided rapidly.

With only half his head above water, Lumian lowered the bone flute and smiled. He activated Spirit World Traversal once more.

Cough, cough, cough! As he materialized back in Room 5 of the first-class cabin, salty seawater spewed from his mouth.

In his eagerness to ensure the effectiveness of the music, he had stopped playing too late, ending up swallowing a mouthful of seawater. Additionally, fearing that too much commotion would disrupt the "teleportation," he had held his breath until returning before choking.

Is this a form of unluckiness? Lumian mused.

Lugano, startled by Lumian's drenched state, asked, "Is it resolved?"

"Seems like it," Lumian replied with a smile.

His shoes and trouser legs bore the marks of wear and tear, scorched and dripping seawater.

At that moment, cheers erupted across the Flying Bird as passengers and crew noticed the receding waves.

“Praise the Sun!”

“By steam!”

“Thank you, Mother of All Things!”

“…”

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Chapter 515 - 515 Strange Fish

515 Strange Fish

Philip, unlike the other jubilant crew and passengers, pushed Gozia away whilst ignoring the pain in his back and palms and dashed to the ship's side, eyes scanning the vast expanse of the sea.

He shifted relentlessly, searching for anything unusual, anything out of place.

Then, a muffled cry pierced the air.

Stunned, he pinpointed the source and sprinted towards the Flying Bird's bow.

The cry grew louder, more desperate. Philip saw a crimson stain blossoming on the distant blue, a large shadow shifting beneath.

The shadow rapidly materialized into a monstrous fish with four eyes—grayish-blue orbs replacing scales and a terrifyingly sharp mouth.

This wasn't a small fish. It writhed and thrashed, frantic flicks of its tail sending water droplets flying.

Waves surged around it, reaching heights of five to six meters even without the wind's aid, crashing down with thunderous force.

The shrill cries subsided momentarily, and the four-eyed monster, gripped by palpable fear, plunged back into the depths, swimming away with a speed that belied its size.

Its remaining brethren followed close behind.

In the first-class cabin 5 by the window, Lumian changed into dry clothes with the casual indifference of someone unobserved.

He knew the Symphony of Hatred had ignited the four-eyed fish's terror, which is why he opted for a swift "teleport" back instead of leaping into the air and unleashing another devastating attack while the creature surfaced.

Fear would drive the monster away and prevent it from unleashing its full fury and raising further havoc.

"Phew," Philip breathed, relief washing over him as the four-eyed fish disappeared from sight.

“Thank goodness, thank goodness,” he muttered, his voice filled with gratitude. He spread his arms wide and exclaimed, “Praise the Sun!”

“Do you know that fish?”

A voice suddenly broke the silence beside Philip.

He turned in surprise to see Louis Berry, with his black hair, green eyes, and sharp features, standing beside him.

His lover, Gozia, stood hesitantly at the cabin entrance, wanting to approach but afraid of approaching the shipboard.

“It’s the Mutated Bannerfish. Heh heh, that’s what scholars call it. At sea, they have another name for it—Death Navigators,” Philip answered Lumian’s question, pressing his hand against the shipboard for support.

“Death Navigators? Why haven’t I heard of it?” Lumian asked, genuinely curious.

To be honest, his knowledge of Beyonder creatures was limited. His previous experiences mainly involved dealing with Beyonders, heretics, and Rampagers.

Philip glanced at him, exhaled, and smiled faintly.

“These fish-like creatures have only appeared in recent years. Many sailors call them the sea’s demons.”

Only appeared in recent years… Lumian frowned thoughtfully.

Such descriptions often pointed towards the corruption of evil gods, environmental anomalies, or natural disasters.

“Has it only recently appeared in the Fog Sea, or was there no legend of such a fish in the Five Seas?” Lumian interrupted Philip’s explanation, eager to clarify his doubts.

Philip pondered for a moment before speaking.

“I used to serve in the Fog Sea fleet. Apart from the Fog Sea, I’ve only traveled the North Sea. I don’t know much about the Berserk Sea, the Sonia Sea, or the Polar Sea, but until a few years ago, I never heard any mention of such a strange fish from the crew, pirates, or colleagues from other fleets.”

Could they be fish corrupted by an evil god? Lumian suddenly felt grateful that he hadn’t impulsively tried to eliminate the Mutated Bannerfish.

Not only would it have exposed his Beyonder powers to the many crew members and passengers, but it could have also led to unforeseen dangers. And for what?

A pile of trash that would only be good enough to feed Ludwig!

Seeing that Louis Berry was no longer fixated on the detail, Philip continued, “Mutated Bannerfish appear on fog-free nights, hovering upright as if silently observing the cosmos. Many sailors and pirates have witnessed this sight, believing the fish are summoning an evil entity.

“Think about it. The night sea is pitch black, the crimson moon barely visible, and only starlight illuminates the terrifying, distorted fish heads silently emerging from the water, motionless and arranged in strange patterns… It’s enough to scare anyone!”

Gazing at the cosmos… Could they have been corrupted by an evil god’s power for some reason? Lumian pondered for a few seconds before asking, “Why are they called Death Navigators?”

Philip rubbed his cheeks.

“After surveying the cosmos, the Mutated Bannerfish remain on the surface, forming two lines like an arrowhead that points towards a specific spot in the sea, as if guiding some unknown creature.

“Some pirates, adventurers, and treasure hunters believe this points to valuable items or hidden treasures, so they try to follow the Mutated Bannerfish to see where they lead.

“But none of the ships that attempted this ever returned, and the crew vanished.

“That’s why we call them Death Navigators.”

Philip sighed and continued, “I once heard from sailors that the Death Navigators can control the waves. Judging by what we just saw, this rumor seems very likely, and it’s much worse than I imagined.

“Right, that Mutated Bannerfish must have been relatively powerful even among Death Navigators.

“However, no Death Navigator has ever attacked a human ship before…”

A soft chuckle escaped Lumian’s lips.

“Perhaps they attacked, but no one survived to spread the news.”

Philip was taken aback.

“That’s true. In such a tidal wave, once a ship capsizes or shatters, only those with special abilities would stand a chance.”

He paused and muttered to himself, “Did that troublesome figure provoke the Death Navigators’ attack?”

“It’s possible,” Lumian replied sincerely.

After confirming that the Death Navigators hadn't returned, Philip turned to the passengers and crew huddled by the window and cabin entrance.

"The danger has passed! The weather has returned to normal!"

The humans, who had cheered earlier, erupted in relieved cries, praising their deities.

Philip looked away and pondered, "Did the Death Navigator ultimately succumb to that unknown threat? I could feel its immense fear."

"It's possible," Lumian replied with the same sincerity.

With this interlude, the Flying Bird increased its speed and arrived at Port Farim, the capital of the Fog Sea Archipelago, before nightfall.

The sun set behind Saint Tick Island, casting a crimson glow over the distant sea, vast forests, and the dormant brown volcano. The sight was magnificent and breathtaking.

Farim, in the native language of the Fog Sea Archipelago, meant "having fragrance and sweetness." Saint Tick Island was rich in cloves, nutmeg, pepper, and sugarcane. Fruits were mainly bananas and grapes, while the rest of the land was planted with cotton.

Looking at the white-walled, red-roofed buildings lining the coastline, the masts, sails, and smokestacks emitting fog, Lumian chuckled and said, "Emperor Roselle, who named this city back then, probably didn't expect Farim to become the last bastion of the indigenous language."

Under generations of cultural genocide, the current Islanders could only speak Intisian. Their native language had been lost long ago.

There might be elders in the primitive tribes living deep within the forest who still understood the indigenous language, but in all the colonial cities and surrounding plantations, one language reigned supreme—Intisian.

Of course, the Fog Sea Archipelago had its own unique dialects, a blend of Intisian and indigenous languages, rarely used by Intisians outside this region.

"Are you disembarking?" Lugano inquired of Lumian.

The Flying Bird wouldn't be leaving the port until the next afternoon.

"Of course," Lumian replied with a hint of excitement. "Now that we're here in Farim, I can't miss the chance to try their famous Golden Somme! Would you like to lead the way, bringing me and Ludwig around, or would you prefer to stay here and keep an eye on him?"

The Fog Sea Archipelago was known for its superior sugarcane, and the sugar liquor produced from its syrup, called “Golden Somme,” was legendary.

Lugano’s first instinct was to accompany his employer, as he felt safer around Lumian’s capable and decisive presence. However, after a moment of reflection, the Doctor decided it would be wiser to stay on board.

While Lumian was undeniably formidable, his talent for attracting trouble was equally impressive!

Leaving Ludwig with enough food for dinner and two rounds of late-night snacks, Lumian disembarked from the Flying Bird, dressed in a white shirt, a black vest, a dark jacket, and matching pants.

In Trier, it was already early autumn, and the air was crisp with chill. However, the Fog Sea Archipelago seemed to be enjoying the tail end of summer. Though the air was warm, it was quickly dispersed by the refreshing sea breeze.

As Lumian strolled out of the port, he spotted a brown-skinned, wrinkled old woman with black features selling golden straw hats across the street.

These hats were woven from a local plant called Golden Leaves, which was favored by the believers of the Eternal Blazing Sun religion. Wearing one supposedly gave the illusion of having the sun shining directly overhead.

Intrigued by the idea, Lumian purchased a hat for 5 licks and placed it on his head. He then continued his leisurely stroll towards the nearby square.

In the heart of the square stood a Sun Obelisk, surrounded by numerous notices adorned with wanted posters.

Lumian stopped, his hands instinctively slipping into his pockets. Before the sun dipped below the horizon, he scanned the wanted posters and committed the bounties to memory.

“Queen Mystic, one of the maritime kings… Bounty of 100 million verl d’or.

“King of the Five Seas Nast, one of the maritime kings… Bounty of 20 million verl d’or.

“Queen of Stars Cattleya, one of the maritime kings… Bounty of 11 million verl d’or.

“King of Immortality Agalito, one of the maritime kings… Bounty of 4 million verl d’or.

“Queen of Ailment Tracy, one of the maritime kings… Bounty of 3 million verl d’or.

“King of Dusk Bulatov Ivan, one of the maritime kings… Bounty of 2.6 million verl d’or…”

Observing Lumian’s intense scrutiny of the six maritime kings’ wanted posters, an adventurer standing beside him couldn’t resist cracking a joke.

“Looking to hunt the maritime kings, eh?”

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Chapter 516 - 516 Questioning Method

516 Questioning Method

Lumian whirled back to face the teasing man.

“Doesn’t every adventurer who comes to sea dream of following in Gehrman Sparrow’s great footsteps?”

The joking adventurer wasn’t past his twenties. Curly brown hair topped a gaunt face, his Intis-blue eyes sparkling with amusement. Despite the unkempt stubble adorning his chin, he emanated a middle-class Trier air, refined in his details.

His attire: a thin blue coat, white pants, and brown boots. A large-caliber revolver and an exquisite rapier balanced his waist.

Lumian’s retort and lofty aspirations seemed to surprise the adventurer. He chuckled after a moment, “Even Sparrow didn’t manage to hunt down any pirate kings.”

“Wasn’t Gehrman Sparrow the one who supposedly killed Barros Hopkins, the vanished King of Black Throne, one of the original Four Kings of the Sea?” Although The Adventurer series hadn’t touched upon it yet, Lumian was a dedicated reader of maritime tales in newspapers and magazines.

The adventurer scoffed, “Unconfirmed. Only when it’s inked into The Adventurer series is it truth. They say Fors Wall was specially hired by the Church of The Fool to promote Sparrow’s exploits.”

Just as I suspected, the famous author, Fors Wall, operates under the protection of The Fool Church, allowing her to write without fear about the secrets of the great pirates… Lumian asked with interest, “So, the relationship between Gehrman Sparrow, the former Vice Admiral Ailment, and the current Queen of Ailment is real?”

“I’d bet on it. The Queen of Ailment herself has never denied it,” the adventurer replied, clearly enjoying the conversation.

After their chat, the adventurer, with his playful demeanor, found Lumian even more appealing. He smiled and asked, “How should I address you? After learning your name and you becoming a legend like Gehrman Sparrow, I can brag to other adventurers that I knew you before you became famous.”

His last sentence was laced with good-natured jest.

“Louis Berry,” Lumian offered his alias. “What about you? Perhaps you’ll be the next Gehrman Sparrow.”

“Batna Comté.” The adventurer with the wide-aperture revolver and exquisite rapier chuckled and said, “I don’t expect to end up like Gehrman Sparrow. I wouldn’t mind becoming the next Blazing Danitz or even the former Strongest Hunter of the Fog Sea, Anderson. That would be quite satisfying.”

Quite ambitious… He doesn’t seem like a newbie to the seas… Lumian quickly assessed Batna, unconsciously slipping into a Conspirer’s mindset. He still believes achieving power like Blazing Danitz is possible after everything he’s seen. That suggests a strong sense of self-belief… Could he be a Beyonder as well?

Adjusting his golden straw hat, Lumian smiled at Batna Comté. “Drink’s on me. How about it?”

Stepping into Port Farim, the bustling capital of the Fog Sea Archipelago, Saint Tick Island, Lumian carried a double purpose: to unearth more pirate intel and acquire the remaining supplementary ingredients for the Reaper potion.

This mission demanded contact with Beyonders and local information brokers.

As his thoughts raced, Madam Magician’s reward flickered across his mind:

“Reaper potion formula:

“Sequence: 5;

“Main ingredients: Gray Demonic Wolf’s front claws, Forest Hunter’s tongue;

“Supplementary ingredients: 80 milliliters of Gray Demonic Wolf’s blood, two Forest Hunter’s fangs, 10 drops of Colorful Bearded Horned Lizard venom, and 10 drops of hornbeam essential oil;

“Ritual: Plan and execute a successful capture of a target with a Sequence higher than your own. Flaunt the completed conspiracy before them, and consume the potion as they witness your victory, filled with fear and despair.

“Note 1: The increased number and higher Sequence the captured targets and the greater their fear, regret, and anger, the more potent the ritual’s effect.

“Note 2: The two main ingredients can be substituted with Gardner Martin’s Beyonder characteristic. His blood and two teeth can also replace the Gray Demonic Wolf’s blood and Forest Hunter’s fangs, respectively.

In other words, Lumian only had one sole missing ingredient: the venom of the Colorful Bearded Horned Lizard. This ingredient hinted at a rare creature.

Fortunately, hornbeam essential oil, a common ingredient among mysticism enthusiasts, was already in his possession before he left Trier.

“Alright.” Batna Comté didn’t reject Lumian’s invitation.

The two walked towards a side street off the square, where a bustling open- air market unfolded.

Towering piles of fruits lined the roadside, while stalls brimmed with Golden Leaves straw hats, juicy sugarcane, sweet scones, savory roasted meat, native cigarettes, and fried banana slices. Brownish-black Islanders, foreign sailors, curious tourists, and seasoned adventurers mingled around barbecue stalls, sharing drinks and laughter.

Two nearby bars, their doors flung open, offered round tables spilling onto the sidewalk, inviting passersby to linger and enjoy a drink.

Batna surveyed the lively scene and cautioned Lumian, “Seems like this is your first visit to the archipelago. Remember, never trust an Islander.

“Their outward deference and meekness mask their true intentions. They dream of swindling our money and selling us for a hefty price. If you lack the strength and intelligence to put them in their place, their evil thoughts will surely be put into action.”

Lumian met Batna’s gaze and chuckled.

“Did they take advantage of you when you first arrived?”

Batna fell silent, avoiding the question.

Lumian didn’t press further. He spent two licks for a small bag of freshly fried banana slices. The crisp exterior gave way to a soft, sweet interior, bursting with flavor.

As he chewed, Batna muttered, “Those are just for children and women.”

How could a grown man, determined to follow in Gehrman Sparrow’s great footsteps, be indulging in fried banana slices?

In theory, at least, I’m still a minor… Lumian mentally dismissed the matter. As they continued through the market, he turned to Batna and asked, “Do pirates often enter Port Farim in disguise?”

“Yes, frequently,” Batna replied without hesitation. “But hunting them here is hardly worth the trouble.”

“Why not?” Lumian raised an eyebrow. “It would be easier to collect the bounty on their heads.”

Batna chuckled and lowered his voice.

“Port Farim’s officials tacitly allow pirates to come here, selling their plundered goods and buying supplies and pleasures in return.

“The pirate trade is a major economic force in Port Farim. Many, including the governor, the local fleet commander, and the garrison head, have amassed wealth through it.”

“As long as the pirates keep a low profile, going after them in Farim is like challenging the local power players. If that happens, you and the pirates risk getting caught, but the pirates might find a way to ‘jailbreak.’”

“Does Trier not have any objections?” Lumian asked, amused.

Outside Trier, people often referred to the Intis government as Trier.

“Who knows? Maybe those who know about the pirate trade are swimming in wealth from corruption. If they don’t, they won’t bother figuring it out,” Batna chuckled. “Either way, pirates are pretty chill in Port Farim and prefer avoiding trouble.”

“Is that so…” Lumian pondered for a moment and said, “If a pirate attacks me, don’t I have the right to defend myself?”

“Yes, but why would they initiate an attack on you?” Batna could sense this guy was trying to provoke the pirates.

“Perhaps they think I’m an easy target?” Lumian replied as he and Batna Comté turned to a nearby bar.

They entered it, choosing to sit inside instead of on the street.

It was equally lively inside, with a mixed-race woman dancing provocatively on the wooden stage at the hall’s center. Her moves synchronized with the music, frequently lifting her legs and following the rhythm. Gradually, she shed her jacket and various layers, revealing ample areas of healthy skin and gentle curves.

As she placed her hand on her undergarment, the surrounding patrons responded with whistles and loud cheers, the atmosphere reaching its climax.

“How about this? In some ways, isn’t Farim more open-minded than Trier? Not only can you see it, but you can also take it away with a sum of money,” Batna remarked with a smile.

Lumian raised his right hand and declared, “This only means that Farim is far enough from the reach of both the Churches and the Trier Avenue du Boulevard.”

“What do you mean?” Batna was momentarily taken aback.

Lumian adopted a pious tone, mimicking a devout believer in the Eternal Blazing Sun. “It’s too far from justice to be bound by the law!”

Seeing Batna's expression freeze, Lumian smiled again.

"Just kidding! Out at sea, who cares about the law? Might makes right!"

Batna chuckled, relieved. "For a second there, I thought you were about to purify the place in the name of God."

Taking their seats, they ordered the Fog Sea Archipelago's famous sugar liquor, Golden Somme.

Eight licks per glass was much cheaper than a Trier.

As the caramel-sweet liquor warmed his throat, Lumian launched into an enthusiastic conversation about Gehrman Sparrow, acting like a devoted follower. He chatted with Batna and even the bartender, drawing them into his passionate discourse.

After a while, Lumian finished his Golden Somme and stood up, drawn towards the central wooden platform where a new stripper had taken the stage.

Batna watched with a knowing smile. He assumed the lad couldn't resist the allure.

Lumian approached the platform, grabbed two patrons who were blocking his way, and effortlessly tossed them aside. With a powerful push against the platform's edge, he leaped onto the stage.

Under everyone's bewildered gaze, Lumian drew his revolver, aimed it at the bar's ceiling, and fired.

Bang!

Dust rained down, startling the stripper into a crouch. Patrons panicked, scrambling for cover. Some stood frozen in shock, others glared indignantly or frowned, and a few even sported expectant grins.

What is he thinking? What is he doing? Batna was dumbfounded.

Lumian blew on the revolver's muzzle and flashed a grin at the patrons.

"Everyone, may I have your attention. I have something to ask you."

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Chapter 517 - 517 Prominent Merchant

517 Prominent Merchant

Lumian ignored the stunned silence that followed his question. A smirk played on his lips as he addressed the group,

“So, where can a fellow find some mystical trinkets around here?”

Upon hearing this question, Batna Comté couldn’t help but raise his right hand and finish his remaining Golden Somme.

Where did this punk come from?

How could he ask such a question in public?

Even if nobody reported him, they’d only see him as a fool!

For a moment, Batna regretted accepting Louis Berry’s invitation. This fellow would tarnish his reputation by association.

Noticing the odd expressions around the bar, Lumian gave a nonchalant shrug. He holstered his revolver and announced,

“Looks like you’re all just ordinary folk, then.”

With that, he leaped off the wooden platform, navigating through the startled crowd back to the counter.

The two drunkards he’d thrown out, along with the others who had been frightened by him, measured his strength and weapons, choosing not to retaliate.

Back on his barstool, Lumian ordered a Lanti Proof with a grin at Batna.

“Port Farim is certainly more open than Trier.”

Batna studied Louis Berry with an “are you serious?” expression, forcing a smile.

“We must follow Gehrman Sparrow’s career, not his actions.”

Is this fellow so obsessed with Gehrman Sparrow that he mimics his cold, reckless demeanor?

Gehrman Sparrow, at least, had the strength to back up his madness. What about you?

Furthermore, Gehrman Sparrow exudes a cold and indifferent madness, while you are reckless, foolish, and brainless. How can the two be equal?

Lumian ignored Batna's jab and turned the conversation to the recent surge in pirate activity in the Fog Sea.

After finishing his Lanti Proof, he bid farewell to Batna and headed out. Walking through the bustling open-air market, he made his way towards the harbor.

Just as Lumian returned to the square plastered with announcements, a sudden jolt sent him whirling around.

A male Islander, sporting a half-top hat and a dusty black jacket, approached hesitantly, a strained smile plastered on his face.

"I saw you at the bar earlier."

"Cut to the chase," Lumian urged impatiently.

The Islander, his brownish-black skin stretched over a lean face, leaned in and lowered his voice.

"Looking for mystical items, are we? I know just the place."

"Really?" Lumian asked in disbelief.

"Can't promise anything, but it's worth a shot. Just don't buy anything if they turn out unsuitable." The Islander's gaze flicked to Lumian's left armpit. "Besides, you're armed and dangerous. Not exactly an easy target for robbery, right?"

"That's true." Lumian contemplated this for a moment, then gave a slow nod. "What's your name?"

"Carmel." The Islander gestured towards a narrow street branching off the square. "Follow me. It's close."

Lumian trailed nonchalantly behind Carmel, their path crossing two streets before they arrived in a district eerily reminiscent of Rue Anarchie.

Crumbling buildings huddled close, new construction jostling for space amidst the narrow road.

Carmel led Lumian into a dimly lit laundry shop, its interior draped with damp clothes. They navigated the maze of hanging garments, arriving finally deep inside the dark room.

There was a door there.

“Disguise yourself first,” Carmel instructed, retrieving two hooded black robes from a hook nearby. “Those who dabble in such things prefer to keep their identities secret.”

Lumian donned the robe, pulling the hood low over his face. Carmel then rapped on the door in a specific rhythm.

It creaked open, revealing a makeshift living room furnished with an old sofa, threadbare armchairs, and a mismatched assortment of furniture.

Six figures, cloaked in identical robes, sat in various positions, their faces obscured by the shadows.

Lumian politely closed the door behind him as Carmel made a brief introduction.

After the two pulled up a stool and sat down, a man with his hood pulled low leaned forward and whispered,

“I need a Royal Jellyfish’s venom crystal. I can offer 5,000 verl d’or.”

Silence.

The next participant sold a Strange Sea Eagle eyeball he had procured.

Seeing that their discussion was on point, Lumian stood up and surveyed the gathering.

“I need a Sphinx’s brain. Name your price.”

The man seeking the Crown Jellyfish’s venom crystal’s voice was carefully controlled as he replied, “I happen to have one. If you pay me 30,000 verl d’or, it’s yours.”

“How can I be sure of its authenticity?” Lumian asked him directly.

The Strange Sea Eagle eyeball seller interjected in a raspy voice, “I can notarize it for you.”

“Excellent. Let me take a look at the goods first,” Lumian smiled, approaching the seller.

The man replied calmly, “Such a valuable mystical item, you wouldn’t expect me to carry it around, would you?

“I’ll only bring it to you if you pay a 50% deposit first. It’s upstairs. You can follow me and make sure I don’t escape. You can even put the deposit with the Notary for safekeeping.”

“Very reasonable.” Just as Lumian finished speaking, he suddenly lunged at the trader with the speed of a cheetah, a right hook swinging through the air.

Bang!

The man crumpled to the ground, his teeth flying in a spray of blood.

The other participants, including the Notary and Carmel, were momentarily stunned before scrambling for the door.

None of them challenged Lumian's assault, nor attempted to use their powers. Their sole focus was on escape.

Carmel, closest to the exit, flung open the door and bolted.

In an instant, his vision blurred, and he found himself back in the simple living room, alongside two others who had suffered the same fate.

They all looked bewildered, as if witnessing a folktale come alive.

Bang!

A yellow bullet slammed into the exit door.

The hooded figures huddled down, covering their heads with practiced movements.

Lumian spun around, pulled back the trader's hood, and pressed the revolver's muzzle against his forehead.

"Not a bad scam," Lumian said with a smile.

He had orchestrated an impromptu conspiracy, drawing attention with a gunshot in the bar and publicly expressing his need for a mystical item. This allowed him to identify any greedy pirates or local swindlers who might possess knowledge beyond the reach of ordinary citizens, including black market information.

It was also a way to digest the potion.

The seller was a typical Islander, with brownish-black skin, a long face, gentle features, and dark amber eyes.

"I wasn't lying to you!" he insisted anxiously and angrily.

"Really?" Lumian cocked the revolver's hammer.

Before closing the door, Lumian had created a Bottle of Fiction, setting a condition that only Beyonders could enter.

None of the participants had successfully "escaped," which confirmed the absence of Beyonders.

If you're not a Beyonder, why mention the main ingredient of the Conspirer potion? Just for fun?

The seller trembled and stammered, "I-I'm sorry. We just wanted to scam some money. We-we can't survive otherwise!"

Lumian wasn't interested in their motives. He glanced at the neatly lined-up accomplices and tapped the trader's forehead with the gun's muzzle.

"What's your name?"

"Roddy," the seller replied, swallowing hard.

Another tap to the forehead.

"Where did you hear about the Sphinx brain, Crown Jellyfish's venom crystal, and Notary?"

This information was inaccessible to ordinary people.

"I-I can't say." A sheen of cold sweat appeared on Roddy's forehead.

Confidentiality agreement or other restrictions? Lumian studied Roddy for a few seconds and smiled.

"Then tell me who your master is."

Roddy froze, his eyes widening in fear.

He hadn't expected the other party to be so certain he had a master, that he was someone else's servant.

"Three, two…" Lumian began the countdown.

"It's Sir Morgalla," Roddy blurted out.

"Then take me there," Lumian calmly requested.

Roddy's sweating intensified.

"No, no, I'm Monsieur Fidel's attendant.

"He's the vice president of the Port Farim Joint Chamber of Commerce."

Participating in numerous mysticism gatherings organized by Fidel as an attendant? Although he can't divulge the corresponding information to others, he can use the information he obtained to swindle adventurers? Lumian stood up thoughtfully, dismantled the Bottle of Fiction, and led Carmel and his swindler accomplices out. He interrogated them one by one and confirmed that Roddy was indeed Fidel Guerra's attendant.

One of the vice president of the Port Farim Joint Chamber of Commerce's primary tasks was to assist pirates in handling sensitive and illegal cargo.

…

Port Farim, Quartier des Black Pearls, Governor-General's Office, 16 Rue Coreas.

Lumian patted Roddy, now donned in his red attendant's attire with gold trimmings and crisp white pants. A smile played on Lumian's lips as he spoke.

"Tell Monsieur Fidel that I'm interested in purchasing some mystical ingredients and would appreciate the opportunity to discuss it further."

"Alright." Roddy yearned to utter a single plea: "If you could kindly remove the revolver from my back, I would be eternally grateful."

Leaning against the weathered wall of a nearby house, Lumian watched as the swindler nervously entered Unit 16, the four-story gray-roofed building adorned with numerous statues.

The moment Roddy stepped inside, escaping the revolver's direct aim, his first instinct was to bury the whole incident and forget it ever happened.

But then he remembered the chilling warning delivered by the man who fired without hesitation: a ten-minute silence from Fidel, and Roddy's true colors as a swindler would be painted loudly across the street.

Should I lie and claim Monsieur Fidel is unavailable? But he doesn't seem easily duped. A drastic reaction could be worse… Roddy, caught in a dilemma, clenched his teeth and rapped on the study door.

Fidel Guerra, a man descended from both Intis and Feynapotter blood, possessed curly black hair that had started to show signs of age, dark brown eyes, and skin darkened by the sun. Though once known for his refined demeanor, time had etched its mark on his face, leaving behind a mane of mottled white hair and prominent wrinkles.

Dressed in a crisp white shirt and a brown vest, he quietly sipped his wine as Roddy, trembling with fear, stammered out their confession. He spoke of their ill intentions, of their attempt to swindle the new adventurer.

As soon as Roddy mentioned Lumian leaping onto the wooden platform, firing a shot to attract attention, and boldly inquiring about obtaining a mystical item, the merchant sighed and interrupted his flustered attendant.

"There's no need to elaborate further. Does he wish to see me now?"

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Chapter 518 - 518 Merchant's Entrustment

518 Merchant's Entrustment

518 Merchant's Entrustment

Twirling the brim of his golden straw hat, Lumian stopped just outside the office door and met Fidel Guerra's gaze across the desk. Lumian's grin was anything but friendly.

"Made a decision, have you? Faster than I expected."

Fidel Guerra, with his partially Feynapotterian features, turned to Roddy and let out a soft sigh.

"Didn't expect my attendant to be the ringleader of a scam syndicate."

"Maybe the paychecks he receives from you don't quite match the lifestyle he sees on a daily basis," Lumian shot back habitually.

Fidel ignored the jab. He studied Lumian, eyes narrowed.

"So that bar act was all for show? To dupe fools like him?"

"Let's say I'm grateful for their thousand verl d'or donation. Looks like Port Farim's got a bright future for con artists." No shame in his banditry, not a flicker.

Roddy felt a swarm of regret gnaw at his insides.

Fidel nodded and inquired, "What's on your shopping list?"

Lumian, affecting an air of indifference, responded, "I'm in the market for a bottle of Colorful Bearded Horned Lizard's venom."

Isn't it the Sphinx's brain? Roddy, who was listening, was taken aback.

For a moment, he couldn't help but wonder if he was the swindler or the man opposite him.

Clad in a white shirt and brown vest, Fidel contemplated for a moment before offering, "I don't have it in stock, but I can procure it for you. It might take two to three days. As for the price, it varies, usually between 3,000 to 4,000 verl d'or, depending on the seller. Need my assistance in acquiring it?"

“No problem.” Lumian, arms slightly spread, replied, “Praise the Sun. You’re a gem.”

Fidel, suspecting mockery, frowned slightly.

He maintained his composure, stating, “I’m not charitable; I’m a businessman. Why not make a profitable deal? Besides, I find forming connections with adventurers like you beneficial. Given money and resources, certain matters are easier for you to handle.”

Fidel, smiling, questioned, “Aren’t you concerned about counterfeit goods? How do you confirm authenticity on the spot?”

Lumian, with an approving smile, quipped, “I know you live here. That’s assurance enough. The famous merchant Fidel? Gunned down six times in a row for pulling a fast one in a deal worth a few thousand verl d’or. Not the kind of rep you’d call respectable news.”

Fidel maintained his impassive gaze on Lumian before a smirk crossed his face.

“Interested in knowing what fate befell those who did?”

“Curious if I’ve got the nerve to make a move now?” Lumian’s gaze narrowed a touch. His smile remained, but it chilled the room in an instant.

He met Fidel’s gaze without hesitation.

After a while, Fidel sighed without anger and remarked, “Your approach reminds me of someone—the legendary adventurer, Gehrman Sparrow.”

“Yes, I’m mimicking him,” Lumian admitted candidly.

Fidel chuckled.

“Imitating his madness, then? So, underneath the act, you’re a calm, rational, and cunning individual?”

Lumian shook his head, smiling, and replied, “No. If I don’t imitate him, I’d be even crazier.”

The atmosphere in the study became tense once more.

Fidel, picking up and sipping fragrant black tea from a bone porcelain cup, acknowledged, “You’re quite the young firebrand. Your vigor even makes an old man like me a bit envious.

“How about taking on a commission? It can fetch you a hefty sum and earn you fame at sea, akin to Gehrman Sparrow.”

Lumian, adjusting his golden straw hat, inquired, “What’s the job?”

“Eliminate a pirate, Baronet Black, Class Khizi, captain of the Golden Nepos. The bounty is 65,000 verl d’or,” Fidel stated calmly. “He used to be the third mate of the King of Dusk, Bulatov. Left the fleet, turned to plundering on his own. Four months back, he stole a batch of my goods on Saint Tick Island. It’s likely sold by now. I don’t expect to recover it. I just want him dead. Let everyone know that anyone who touches my goods meets their end.”

Lumian, teasingly, asked, “What if it was the King of Dusk who did it?”

Fidel fell into silence.

After a brief pause, Fidel brushed off Lumian’s question and continued, “I’ll provide you with regular updates on Khizi—his characteristics, strength, ship location, and onshore whereabouts. As a bonus, I’ll throw in an extra 25,000 verl d’or as a reward.

“If you manage to take down Khizi, I’ll expedite the process to secure the full bounty through my connections and help spread your reputation. Everything Khizi owns will be yours.

“So, what do you say? Eliminate Khizi, and you’ll become one of the most renowned adventurers at sea.”

25,000 additional reward and intel support… Lumian thought for a moment and asked with a smile, “How many adventurers have you pitched this to?”

“Seven or eight, all of whom I hold in high regard,” Fidel replied candidly. “There’s no penalty for failure, as long as you survive.”

Inwardly, Lumian mused, So, it doesn’t matter whether I accept the mission or not? He nodded.

“Hunting pirates is the duty of every adventurer.”

With a verbal agreement established, Fidel reached into a drawer, producing a brown paper envelope, which he tossed to Lumian.

Abruptly, he looked up at Fidel.

“Has Khizi been seen in Port Farim recently?”

“Yes, I’m certain of this intel, though his exact hiding spot is unknown,” Fidel replied with a slight nod.

Agreeing to return in two days for updates on both the Colorful Bearded Horned Lizard venom and Baronet Black, Lumian left 16 Rue Coreas and made his way towards the harbor.

Roddy, fearing severe punishment, was surprised when Fidel merely waved him off, instructing, “Go back to your room and reflect.”

“Yes, Monsieur Guerra.” Roddy, relieved, left the study and ascended the dimly lit stairs to the second floor.

Yet, as he walked, a chill overcame him, and he shivered.

The darkness around him deepened, and in the dim light, something emerged from behind his shadow.

Attempting to cry out for help, Roddy, gripped by terror, found himself forever voiceless.

…

Meanwhile, Lumian didn’t head directly back to the Flying Bird. Instead, under the cooling night sky, he strolled towards a street he had recently passed.

There stood a modest cathedral—The Fool’s Cathedral.

Having previously spotted The Fool’s Sacred Emblem on the bell tower, Lumian had decided to offer a prayer upon his return.

As expected, Mr. Fool’s faith seems prevalent at sea. Port Farim, being an Intis colony, boasts several cathedrals. Lumian gazed at the warm light emanating from the cathedral, removed his golden straw hat, and entered.

Inside, Lumian noticed around 20 to 30 individuals, likely homeless, resting at the edge of the wide hall. Some had tattered blankets, while others relied solely on their clothes for warmth.

The Fog Sea Archipelago wouldn’t turn these tramps into ice statues this season, but rain lurked, ready to pour at any time. Finding shelter was a coveted haven for these tramps, and The Fool’s cathedral offered solace.

Back in my vagabond days, when brutal weather hit or days without food wore me down, I’d roll the dice in the cathedrals of the two Churches. If the bishop or padre was decent, they’d toss a meal my way and a spot to crash for the night. But come dawn, I had to vanish, or I’d end up in those rotten relief centers… Lumian reminisced, found a seat, and started praying.

The Fool’s cathedral embraced silence at night. Now and then, folks strolled in, muttered their prayers, and exited. Some wore merchant garb, others rocked a sailor’s look, and a few even emitted a faint pirate vibe, but none disturbed the peaceful aura.

Lumian wasn’t sure what to pray for. Back when he’d occasionally drop by the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral, he’d just echo bits of scripture in his mind, tossing wishes like coins and hoping for corresponding blessings. What if they actually came true?

Now, he knew such rituals were futile, and he had few desires.

Most importantly, Lumian had only heard clerical teachings about The Fool a few times. He couldn't remember much from the Bible except for the eight Angels and Mr. Fool's authority. But did that matter now?

Recounting his journey from leaving Trier to arriving at Port Farim, Lumian's emotions gradually settled into a sense of tranquility.

"May Mr. Fool bless me. May all catastrophes be resolved. May Aurore be resurrected…"

After about fifteen minutes, Lumian concluded his prayer with a simple wish.

As he stood up, a distant rumble echoed. The cathedral's windows rattled, and the building creaked and swayed.

Lumian raised his eyebrows. Amidst the startled tramps, he walked to the door and gazed towards the source of the noise.

Near the governor-general's office, billowing smoke and flames rose into the sky, casting an eerie glow on the surroundings.

Lumian couldn't help but raise his right hand and stroke his chin. He muttered to himself, This shouldn't have anything to do with my arrival, right?

It seemed something significant had occurred in Port Farim.

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Chapter 519 - 519 One Event A Day

519 One Event A Day

The flames of Quartier des Black Pearls danced in Lumian's eyes, pulling him deep into thought. As a Conspirer, his mind instinctively dissected the possibilities.

The Resistance and civil independence factions were easily ruled out—they had no presence in this archipelago, Intis's first far-flung colony. The religious and cultural genocide, along with the assimilation efforts of successive governments, they had tirelessly worked to make it happen. Emperor Roselle's policies had transformed this place into something akin to Intis's overseas province—loose laws and weak security. The Islanders, having abandoned their original faith, now saw themselves as discriminated citizens in the Intis border regions. This discrimination mirrored the plight of Reemians in the south of Intis and Savoyards in the east. Regardless, Trier's citizens held a universal disdain for all foreigners. However, their vigilance heightened against Islanders notorious for scams and thuggery.

Did the pirate trade spark internal strife, or were Southern Continent organizations, seeking to overthrow colonial rule, deliberately causing trouble in the Fog Sea Archipelago? Perhaps some ambitious individual is following the lead of an evil god. Lumian's thoughts raced as he noticed a 2.5-meter-tall half-giant emerging from a room beside the cathedral, dressed in a black trench coat and silk top hat.

Addressing the bewildered supplicants and tramps, he assured them, "Don't worry. The Lord will protect everyone.

"Stay here and don't go out. Wait for the riot to subside. There won't be any danger."

"Praise The Fool!" The believers of The Fool Church found solace, pressing their hands to their chests and bowing.

Their expressions softened, conveying a sense of security.

The tramps exchanged glances, but none dared to leave.

In the minds of most Intisians, a cathedral was a safer haven than any government, regardless of the Church it belonged to.

At that moment, golden sunlight descended into the area where the explosion had occurred, accompanied by a series of dense explosions, though not as deafening as

before.

It was evident that the governor-general's office and the Beyonders of the two Churches were addressing the anomaly.

Simultaneously, Lumian observed the sky, once illuminated by moonlight and starlight, darkening. Despite no change in the weather, the street outside seemed cloaked in a thin, dark fog.

Ignoring the half-giant bishop's shouts after a moment of contemplation, Lumian opened the cathedral door of The Fool and stepped out.

The temperature outside had notably dropped, akin to Trier's autumn.

Beneath the gas street lamps' glow, Lumian retraced his steps back to the port.

Suddenly, a swaying figure emerged from a nearby alley.

The figure, clad in a thin shirt and pants with bare feet, had a pale, wrinkled face.

His eyes were more white than brown, and livor mortis covered his exposed skin.

Zombie? Lumian raised his eyebrows.

As the suspected zombie—an old man—staggered towards Quartier des Black Pearls, it seemed to detect a hint of spirituality and blood, abruptly turning to Lumian and emitting an inhuman sound.

Lumian promptly condensed a crimson fireball, nearly white, and sent it hurtling towards the zombie.

Amidst the rumbling explosion, the zombie's head shattered, and its body disintegrated. It met its demise once more.

No more movement.

Is that all you've got? Lumian had originally wondered if he had encountered a more dangerous undead creature.

Pressing on, he formed ten to twenty crimson fireballs above his head, behind him, on his shoulders, and at his sides, allowing them to follow his movements and maintain a relative suspension.

As Lumian rounded a corner, he spotted a young couple screaming in terror and fleeing.

Behind them, a zombie pursued, its dark-red heart and white intestines faintly discernible from numerous gunshot wounds.

A nearly white crimson fireball, unleashed by Lumian, flew past the couple and exploded on the pursuing zombie.

Rumble. The charred corpse scattered in all directions, accompanied by residual flames.

The young couple, halted in surprise, stared at Lumian surrounded by ten to twenty crimson, nearly white fireballs. Confusion and disbelief filled their eyes.

“Are you waiting for death?” Lumian cursed as he advanced. “Take the back street and enter The Fool’s cathedral.”

“Alright, alright!” The young man and woman responded instinctively, as if facing armed police officers or adventurers.

The fireball was clearly more powerful than a gun!

As the couple entered the street where The Fool’s cathedral was located, Lumian, resembling an envoy of flames, continued towards the port at a moderate pace.

Along the way, he encountered a few more waves of people emerging from bars, open-air markets, and other places, who had encountered zombies.

Lumian didn’t say a word. He directed the crimson, nearly white fireballs around him to help them eliminate the revived corpses. Then, he instructed them to hide in the nearest cathedral.

The zombies’ pursuit and the intimidation of the fireballs made his words persuasive. No one insisted on finding their own way.

If there were any, Lumian couldn’t be bothered.

After several similar encounters, Lumian began to discern a pattern.

These zombies weren’t reanimated from the living; they were originally deceased. The entirety of Port Farim’s deceased had risen without any discernible cause.

These zombies instinctively headed towards the explosion site, but if they encountered the living on the way, they’d be drawn by both flesh and spirituality, leading them to pursue, kill, and gnaw.

With this understanding, Lumian no longer advised passersby to seek refuge in distant cathedrals. Instead, he directed them to avoid hospitals, graveyards, and similar places, urging them to stay for two to three hours in bustling bars, dance halls, or houses where no recent deaths had occurred.

After a series of halts and advances, Lumian returned to the port and reboarded the Flying Bird. He continued unleashing the crimson, almost white fireballs until only two remained.

Philip, leaning against the ship’s rail, kept his eyes fixed on the governor-general’s office.

“What happened?” he inquired of Lumian.

“How would I know?” Lumian replied, amused.

Philip swiftly changed the topic.

“Did you come across any anomalies?”

Only then did Lumian briefly recount the explosion near the governor-

general’s office and the sudden reanimation of the corpses.

“Zombie summoning?” Philip muttered to himself, a frown creasing his brow.

Without awaiting Lumian’s response, he sighed and said, “It was smooth only on the first day of this voyage. On the second day, we encountered Bone Splitter. On the third day, Death Navigators attacked us at noon. By night, or rather in the early hours of the fourth day, another zombie calamity struck in Port Farim… We still have six days until we reach Port Santa…”

Lumian felt a pang of guilt.

In theory, his attraction to or attraction by calamities shouldn’t be so frequent. When he was in Trier, he didn’t encounter mystical incidents every day. If that were the case, 007 would have died from overwork.

Encountering one or two calamities throughout the journey would be understandable, but considering Dardel’s Derangement, it’s truly a daily affair… Could it be that some unclean entity is tailing me? Could it be the cause, the trigger, or the convergence? And is there essentially only one calamity I’ve encountered? The more Lumian pondered, the more he felt the urge to correspond with Madam Magician to investigate if there was an underlying issue behind such frequent calamities.

“Perhaps the zombie calamity was triggered by the initial trouble on the ship. Once we leave the Flying Bird, our subsequent journey might become peaceful,” Lumian casually consoled Philip.

He didn’t hold much confidence in his words.

“Hope so.” Philip spread his arms slightly and prayed devoutly. “Praise the Sun!”

Lumian took his time before heading back to the first-class cabin. He lingered by the shipboard, surveying Port Farim.

The authorities’ silent endorsement of pirate activities in the Fog Sea Archipelago had resulted in a certain level of chaos and misconduct. However, it had also led to a notable increase in the number of Beyonders compared to regular Intisian cities. Swiftly organizing a resistance, they cleared the streets of zombies, minimizing the casualties among citizens and tourists.

Whether pirates and adventurers exploited the turmoil to commit crimes or settle scores remained uncertain.

In less than half an hour, the turmoil near the explosion site subsided. Official Beyonders dispersed, addressing disturbances on other streets.

“Very good. Nothing major happened. They managed to control it in time,” Philip remarked, relieved.

You can say that, but I can’t… Lumian laughed self-deprecatingly.

Only then did Philip feel at ease enough for casual conversation.

“Did you go into Farim for a drink?”

“That’s right,” Lumian replied with a smile. “I happened to receive a commission.”

“What commission?” Philip asked casually.

“Hunting a pirate—Baronet Black.” Lumian didn’t withhold any details.

Philip’s eyes narrowed as he inquired with a frown, “Are you sure you’re stronger than Baronet Black? He has a ship and over a hundred subordinates! Besides, even if you find an opportunity to assassinate him, aren’t you afraid of the King of Dusk’s retaliation? He’s one of the maritime kings!”

“Just because I accepted a commission doesn’t mean I’ll definitely do it. I don’t even know where to find Black Baronet Class Khizi. That’s his name, right?” Lumian didn’t mind the potential repercussions from the King of Dusk.

There were more than one Saint who wanted to deal with him!

Philip observed Louis Berry’s nonchalant demeanor, realizing he had accepted a mission but would reconsider only if there was a chance to complete it. Thus, he didn’t press further on the matter.

The next morning.

As the security supervisor finished breakfast, a subordinate sailor informed him: The governor-general’s office had ordered the port to be temporarily closed, and all ships were prohibited from leaving!

Philip suppressed the urge to stand up and asked in a deep voice, “What are the soldiers at the port doing?”

“Searching ship by ship,” the sailor replied truthfully.

In Room 5 of the first-class cabin, Lumian observed the chaotic harbor where the army had entered and continued writing a letter to Jenna and Franca.

“Something seems to have happened to Port Farim on Saint Tick Island in the Fog Sea Archipelago. Ask that person and see if he knows the exact situation.”

At this point, Lumian raised his right hand and tapped his chest four times—up, down, left, right—like Mr. K. He whispered sympathetically, “Poor 007.”

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Chapter 520 - 520 Demon Warlock

520 Demon Warlock

Trier, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, 9 Rue Orosai, Apartment 702.

Franca awoke naturally, rising lazily from her bed. Her plans were simple—grabbing a piece of toast, anticipating a heavy lunch.

Lately, the absence of Mirror People leads had made her days relaxed.

Thank the Heavens, thank the Earth, thank Mr. Fool. Lumian, the jinx, has left Trier… Franca muttered in her pre-meal prayer.

As she sipped her milk, Jenna returned and pointed to the coffee table.

“Rabbit Chasel delivered a letter this morning. It’s from Lumian.”

“Letter?” Franca’s eyes narrowed as her relaxed body tensed.

The source of Dardel’s Derangement was still at large. What had happened this time?

“He mentioned an incident in the capital of the Fog Sea Archipelago. He wishes to gather details and hopes you can inquire with your contact among the authorities. I refrained from waking you since you only reach out to that contact late at night, so I opted to read the letter immediately. It seems you can only make inquiries during the night,” Jenna explained concisely.

“How considerate. Lumian, that rascal, would undoubtedly knock on the door and jolt me awake!” Franca, who had experienced Lumian’s disruptive wake-

up calls countless times, felt unusually touched.

She chuckled.

“Did something happen to Port Farim once he arrived? Even though it seems unrelated to him, but…”

Franca leaned back slightly and remarked, “What’s up with the walking mysticism catastrophe detector?”

Since it wasn’t urgent, she planned to ask about 007 in the telegram group later at night. After all, he was an official Beyonder of Trier. It was unlikely he would have immediate information about the events in the Fog Sea Archipelago’s capital.

If she didn't initiate the inquiry, he might remain unaware.

Franca, with her penchant for instant messaging, set down the bottle of milk and wrote Lumian a teasing reply.

"If you want to know what's happening, investigate it yourself. A walking mysticism catastrophe detector like yourself doesn't need clues or information. Stroll through the streets of Port Farim aimlessly, and who knows, you might bump into the person involved!

"Hey, let's not turn letter-writing into work-related communication, using it only to discuss issues or ask for help. Can't you share the interesting sea tales and details of pirates' bounties?

"Heh heh, ever since you left Trier, everything's been calm and quiet. I can enjoy sleeping in again. Enjoy your sweet revenge. No need to rush back. Give us a heads up if you need assistance…"

Jenna observed Franca thoughtfully as she gleefully filled nearly two pages of the letter.

…

Inside Room 5 of the Flying Bird's first-class cabin in Port Farim, Lumian, confined to his quarters, sneered as he finished reading Franca's reply.

How many complaints has this fellow received from 007? She's blaming me for the frequent mysticism catastrophes.

Folding the letter, he brought it to Ludwig's lips.

The boy, who had just finished dessert, looked at Lumian and remarked, "I'm not a shredder."

"I thought you eat everything," Lumian replied casually as he lit the letter, watching it turn to ashes in the sea breeze blowing through the window.

Shortly after lunch, Philip knocked on the door, accompanied by four soldiers in blue military uniforms adorned with golden threads.

The officer, holding copies of Lumian and the others' identification documents, compared their faces to black-and-white photos.

"Like you, they came from Port Gati and only arrived last night?" the officer inquired, having confirmed Philip's reliability.

"Yes, I watched them board the ship. We met frequently in the past two days," Philip replied, wisely choosing not to expose the fact that Lumian and the others' identities and information were fake.

Very wise… Otherwise, you'll witness true trouble… Lumian joked inwardly.

If his disguise were to be exposed, he would choose to “teleport” away with Lugano and Ludwig rather than make a scene and reveal the adventurer Louis Berry to the world. Lumian’s only devotion to Gehrman Sparrow, ready to hunt pirates when the opportunity arose. In truth, Lumian had no intention of becoming a true adventurer. His purpose for venturing out to sea was revenge!

After confirming Lumian and the others’ situation, the officer led the soldiers to the next room, with Philip accompanying them.

Lumian observed that the investigation of the Flying Bird was thorough, yet not overly intense. The officers followed procedures meticulously without delving into further inquiries.

It made sense. The explosion in Quartier des Black Pearls and the abnormality of the corpses couldn’t have occurred overnight. Even if it was an accident, it had been brewing for a while. The extensive impact suggested a prolonged development. Unless the person involved was a demigod, it was nearly impossible for ordinary authorities to trace any demigod-related traces.

This meant the Flying Bird, having arrived in Port Farim only the previous night, likely had no connection to the incident. The focus was on confirming the passengers’ identities.

The possibility of a demigod being injured and unable to escape Port Farim was considered, warranting a comprehensive investigation, but there were no suspicious casualties on the Flying Bird.

The officers disembarked after nearly two hours, accompanied by 20 to 30 soldiers. Lumian, now on the deck, approached Philip and inquired, “What happened last night?”

Philip glanced around and lowered his voice.

“I heard from my former colleague that they’re searching for Demon Warlock Burman.”

“Burman?” Lumian expressed his ignorance.

Having only read a portion of the wanted posters the previous night, Lumian was not familiar with Demon Warlock Burman. His attention had been on maritime kings, pirate admirals, and other significant pirates. Then, he had shared a drink with Batna Comté.

“He’s a wanted adventurer,” Philip explained with a sigh. “Before I left the Fog Sea fleet, he was still normal. He chased bounties and treasures and met his wife, Helen, a female adventurer. Later, Helen died in an accident, causing Burman to go crazy. He wanted to revive his wife and did many things—both good and bad attempts.

“He mercilessly orchestrated the destruction of a 300-person town to fulfill the conditions for a resurrection ritual. He organized gatherings of evil Warlocks, aiming to use the lives of others, especially newborns, for cruel and bloody witchcraft to revive Helen. These events pushed his bounty to surpass Bone Splitter Basil, reaching 600,000 verl d’or.”

In his quest to resurrect his wife, he was driven to become a cruel and cold Demon Warlock? Lumian suddenly sighed.

If Madam Magician hadn’t found him back then, if Mr. Fool hadn’t offered a glimmer of hope, and if the Tarot Club hadn’t arranged for two formidable Psychiatrists to provide treatment, would he now resemble Burman and carry a Demon-prefixed moniker?

Moreover, simply treading the path of boons would expedite his growth. With Termiboros’s aid, he could reach Sequence 5 Fate Appropriator within a few months. The obliteration of a 300-person town held the potential to elevate him to a Circle Inhabitant.

“600,000 verl d’or is nearly on par with Vice Admiral Black Tide Holle Sassen, who has the lowest bounty among pirate admirals,” Lumian remarked, drawing a comparison.

Vice Admiral Black Tide was a great pirate who had only gained fame in recent years. His bounty was 700,000 verl d’or.

Philip fell silent for a moment before adding, “Burman might not be weaker than Holle Sassen, but he doesn’t have his own fleet. He’s always alone and occasionally collaborates with those evil Warlocks. This allows him to escape authorities’ encirclements and successfully infiltrate towns adorned with his wanted posters.”

From Philip’s description, Lumian gathered that Demon Warlock Burman possessed diverse abilities, excelling at disguises.

With the elegance of a true Warlock, Burman combined it with mastery over the power of the dead, whether acquired through resurrection research or inherent in his original Sequence’s contradictory description of both “comprehensive” and “specialty skills.”

…

The port blockade left the Flying Bird stranded in Farim, delayed from its scheduled departure.

At 4 p.m., Lumian found himself with nothing to do. Sporting his new golden straw hat, he disembarked from the ship, where passengers and sailors could now freely move. Once more, he stepped into Port Farim.

He planned to investigate the scene of last night's explosion. Perhaps he could unearth some clues.

What lay in ruins was a hospital. Nearly half of it crumbled, unveiling a massive pit leading underground. Corpses littered the remaining structures, amidst fresh blood and humanoid shadows charred by the blast.

With the ban lifted, numerous adventurers flocked to the site, seeking answers. Lumian blended into the crowd, discreetly observing.

"Louis, you're here too?" Suddenly, Lumian recognized a familiar voice.

It was Batna Comté, armed with a substantial revolver and an exquisite rapier. Meticulously groomed, he looked sharp and sophisticated.

"That's right," Lumian replied with a smile. "As an adventurer, how can I miss the grand occasion of pursuing the Demon Warlock?"

Our main goal is to gather clues for a reward… Batna muttered under his breath.

As he investigated the battle remnants for leads, he casually inquired, "Did you come across those resurrected corpses last night?"

"I did. Besides being a bit eerie, there's nothing noteworthy about them," Lumian boasted.

Batna glanced at him and suddenly smiled.

"Anything unusual happened to you after leaving the bar last night?"

Lumian replied nonchalantly, "I ran into a few swindlers and walked away with a small fortune."

A small fortune… Batna was taken aback.

He suddenly recalled Louis Berry's actions at the bar and his words: "Perhaps they think I'm an easy target?

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Chapter 521 - 521 Guidance of Fate?

When Batna turned his gaze back to Lumian, there was a discernible shift in his eyes.

The mimicry of Gehrman Sparrow and the apparent recklessness that characterized this guy seemed all too contrived. Beneath the facade lurked cunning and a hint of sinister intent!

Anyone falling for his act was in for a world of trouble!

Lumian chose not to dwell on how he'd managed to swindle a small fortune out of the swindlers. Instead, together with Batna, he meticulously surveyed the aftermath of the explosion, scrutinizing every detail.

Regrettably, even the official Beyonders, armed with their diverse Sequences and synergistic combinations, were at a loss, let alone the duo lacking any proficiency in divination or prophecy.

Batna absentmindedly ran his fingers over the finely crafted rapier hanging diagonally at his waist, letting out a sigh.

Chapter 522 - 522 Excellent Scheme

Amid the bustling scene, Lumian relished his drink until the clock neared midnight. Exiting the bar with Batna, they stepped onto the street, where the once-warm sea breeze had turned chilly.

Batna hesitated before asking, “Do you seriously plan to go after Baronet Black?”

Hadn’t Louis Berry’s performance been a repeat of the previous night’s scheme, expecting Black Baronet Class Khizi to come looking for him?

Lumian turned his head, his green eyes devoid of any signs of intoxication. “Otherwise? If he doesn’t seek me out, where am I supposed to find him? Sneak onto the Golden Nepos and take on their entire ship solo?”

Fair point… Batna conceded that Louis Berry’s logic had merit.

Once Black Baronet made land, he would likely disguise himself, making him hard to track. At sea or on his own boat, a lone adventurer would find it nearly impossible to take him down. Even lions feared a wolf pack. Moreover, among the wolves, aside from Class Khizi, there were a few heads with Beyonder powers.

Chapter 523 - 523 Eye of Illusory

523 Eye of Illusory

A lanky shadow emerged from the shadows in translucent form. Swiftly, it lunged at Lumian, as if eager to claim a new host.

Resembling the possession of Wraiths and evil spirits, this entity sought control but lacked the speed to complete the process in a mere blink.

In an instant, Lumian, previously dormant, transformed into a shadowy figure, melding seamlessly with the darkness, leaving the bed bereft of his presence.

This marked the manifestation of his newly contracted skill—Shadow Transformation!

An eerie hush enveloped the room, dominated by the tall, translucent shadow, erasing any trace of Lumian or his unseen assailant.

Suddenly, the darkness rifted, revealing a decaying, skeletal python oozing yellowish-green pus.

Empty-eyed, its fangless mouth resembled a vortex, emitting a hurried, piercing sound. A suction force tugged at the surrounding shadows, drawing them in.

It seemed like an undead creature, a specialist in consuming shadows and shadowy creatures.

Room 5 of the Flying Bird's first-class cabin's master bedroom assumed an otherworldly tableau. Despite the lingering dim light, shadows dissipated, leaving everything cloaked in pure darkness.

In due time, Lumian emerged from the shadows, resuming his human form against the backdrop of a lush carpet and an exquisite wardrobe.

Simultaneously, a towering figure materialized—a knight adorned in tattered black armor. Pale flames flickered in its eye sockets, putrid liquid seeping from the armor's crevices, with only sticky flesh clinging to its exposed skin.

With a broadsword raised, the dead knight advanced, slashing at Lumian, as if poised to shatter both bed and wardrobe.

Lumian's agile form shifted, maneuvering from facing the Death Knight, the Shadow-Swallowing Python, and the looming tall, thin shadow to flank them all.

Crash!

The broadsword of the Death Knight cleaved through the wardrobe, sending fragments flying. Lumian, reacting swiftly, crouched down, clenched his fists, and struck the heavy brownish-yellow carpet.

From the center, a multitude of crimson, nearly white flames burst forth, consuming every inch of the room. The inferno devoured the three undead entities suspected to be from the spirit world.

Rumble!

Within the roaring flames, fireballs materialized and shot out from Lumian's form.

They homed in on the Death Knight, the Shadow-Swallowing Python, and the lanky black shadow, or recklessly engulfed the sizable bedroom.

Rumble!

The crimson, nearly white fireballs detonated consecutively, tearing apart the three undead beings, pulverizing the bed, desk, and other furnishings. Pungent smoke billowed from the scorched carpet.

In this explosive turmoil, any entity lacking pure ethereality or possessing partial corporeality faced inevitable destruction in the confined space. The once steel-clad armor of the Death Knight crumbled instantly, and the Shadow-Swallowing Python fractured into a multitude of burning remains.

Though the lanky shadow fared relatively better, it too succumbed to the engulfing flames, dwindling in substance.

Rumble!

Although the Flying Bird boasted a steel structure, the impact of such force—

reminiscent of multiple cannons targeting a confined space—inevitably took its toll on Room 5 of the first-class cabin. Strangely, only cracks marred the inner wall, with neither the wall nor the door fully giving way.

However, the formless barrier enveloping the area shuddered violently, on the verge of disintegration.

As shockwaves rebounded from the walls, doors, and ceiling, Lumian, the catalyst of the explosion, suffered as well. It was akin to being struck repeatedly by a massive hammer, with his vision clouded by golden specks and a metallic taste of blood in his throat.

The air, instantly devoured by flames, left him with a suffocating sensation.

Amidst the tumultuous flames, a figure emerged from the darkness, standing near the window, adorned in a black robe with a loose hood. Numerous wounds marked his body, testament to the explosive waves and engulfing flames, leaving charred imprints.

Lumian observed that the man's once fine hairs had transformed into pale- white, nearly indistinguishable feathers. Some were charred, emitting a dark dense fog instead of thick smoke.

Rather than the usual red blood, a thick yellowish-green hue oozed from the wounds.

Under the raised hood, Lumian discerned a pale-white face and a few ulcers reaching down to the bone. Vague traces of pale-white fur adorned the wounds.

In the blink of an eye, Lumian locked eyes with his opponent, who sported cold flaxen-colored irises. Between the brows of the hooded figure, a crack swiftly widened, revealing an illusory vertical eye with a deep purple border that almost verged on black. Devoid of eyelashes or pupils, it seemed to harbor countless pale-white patterns.

This peculiar vertical eye instantly mirrored Lumian's figure.

His initial intention to "teleport" behind the hooded man and employ the Spell of Harrumph met an abrupt freeze.

The impact resonated at the spiritual level.

It was akin to Lumian's Soul Body losing the protective shield of his physical form and standing exposed to scorching sunlight. Instinctively, fear, stiffness, and lethargy gripped him.

Ordinarily, humans explored the spirit world through Astral Projection, rarely detaching their Soul Body—the core of their soul—from their physical being, always shrouded in protection.

The Arbiter pathway's Psychic Piercing bypassed the physical body, Ether Body, Astral Projection, and Body of Heart and Mind, directly influencing the Soul Body. It carried an almost undefendable reputation, affecting individuals to varying degrees.

Lumian suspected that the Spell of Harrumph shared these characteristics.

Within the assailant's dark-purple, nearly black vertical eye, pale-white patterns silently spun, as if seeking the essence of Lumian's Spirit Body.

The sensation resembled being scrutinized by penetrating rays of light, causing Lumian's Spirit Body to quiver slightly, impeding intricate thoughts.

Just as he was about to take the simplest action of sinking his consciousness into the Blood Emperor mark on his right hand, the hooded man emitted a sudden pained groan.

His head snapped back as if struck by a bullet, the once illusory, dark-purple vertical eye now blurry, oozing dark-red blood mixed with yellowish-green pus.

With a pained groan, the hooded figure swiftly turned and soared out of the window, dragged by an unseen force.

Observing this, Lumian didn't hasten to block the escape with Spirit World Traversal. Instead, he raised his right hand and snapped his fingers.

Boom!

At the window, a crimson, almost blinding light erupted, and a violent explosion engulfed the hooded man.

Lumian had set this as a trap.

Before entering a state of "sleep," he had concealed the master bedroom within the Bottle of Fiction. There were two entrances, one by the window and the other by the door, accessible only to beings with superpowers. Both exits harbored delayed explosion fireballs.

Any trigger would unleash devastation.

Amidst the fiery explosion, the hooded man was propelled off his feet, crashing against the window frame. His limbs seemed on the brink of tearing from his body.

Without a moment's hesitation, Lumian "teleported" to the severely injured and unconscious man, harrumphing at his foe.

Two beams of white light shot forth, striking the target and rendering him completely unconscious.

As Lumian prepared for his next move, pairs of arms suddenly emerged from the darkness at the shattered exit of the Bottle of Fiction.

Some were covered in warts, some decayed to the point of pus overflowing, and some only displayed blackened bones…

These arms seized the hooded man's clothes and dragged him into the shadows, disappearing without a trace.

Observing this, Lumian refrained from an immediate transformation into a shadow creature to pursue them. Instead, he stood his ground, a slight frown creasing his brows.

The assailant shared an uncanny resemblance to Demon Warlock Burman as depicted on the wanted posters, but the non-human feeling was even more pronounced. The details suggested an undying monster rather than a human.

Lumian wasn't caught off guard by Demon Warlock Burman's appearance. It was one of the anticipated outcomes.

He had deliberately voiced suspicions about Fidel's connection with the Demon Warlock in front of him without providing clarity, fostering the illusion that Louis Berry, a bold adventurer with a penchant for conspiracies, was attempting to extort money from the prominent merchant.

Under normal circumstances, even if Fidel had something to hide, he wouldn't act so swiftly. He would likely observe closely for a few days to confirm the situation. Lumian, however, had "offered" him an opportunity this time.

Louis Berry, the adventurer, had made public the commission he accepted to lure out Baronet Black!

In such a scenario, it wouldn't raise eyebrows if he were killed by Class Khizi.

The death of an overconfident individual in Port Farim wouldn't spark trouble or suspicion.

So, why not nip the danger in the bud?

Even if Louis Berry's suspicions lacked evidence, they would still draw the attention of official Beyonders.

Lumian's "performance" at the bar the previous night seemed to bait Black Baronet Class Khizi, but in reality, it was bait for the merchant, Fidel Guerra!

If Fidel had no ties to the Demon Warlock, it wouldn't trigger an additional reaction. Lumian merely needed to pursue the superficial purpose of hunting Black Baronet. If there was a connection, he would promptly receive a "response."

To Lumian's surprise, the abilities exhibited by Demon Warlock Burman shared similarities with the few divine pathways he knew, but there were also notable differences!

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Chapter 524 - 524 Infighting

524 Infighting

The illusory eye between the Demon Warlock's brows bore a remarkable resemblance to the Eye of Mystery Prying from the Warlock pathway. However, this entity took a unique form, manifesting as a vertical eye rather than the typical manifestation within the eye itself. Lumian had never encountered or heard of such a phenomenon before.

While a Mystery Pryer might experience similar abnormalities as a High-

Sequence Beyonder, it was clear that Burman hadn't reached the Saint level. Otherwise, Lumian would have been the one fleeing, not him. In such a scenario, Lumian might not have been able to escape even if he desired; his only hope would be that the residual aura of the Blood Emperor could momentarily distract Burman, enabling him to "teleport" away.

Considering the authorities' wanted poster, information from 007, and details gathered from Philip and others, Lumian had long concluded that a Demon Warlock like Burman couldn't be a Sequence 4—he certainly wasn't audacious enough to hunt a demigod.

Based on the illusory vertical eye and Burman's diverse, comprehensive abilities, Lumian sensed a true alignment with the characteristics of a Warlock. However, no Warlock's Eye of Mystery Prying resembled this. Not only did it grow between the brows and become a vertical eye, marked with pale-white patterns against a nearly black background, but it also possessed the ability to intimidate others' Spirit Bodies, revealing a perceived "truth."

In that moment, Lumian felt as if he had been stripped of all externalities, leaving only his Spirit Body to resist Burman's. Yielding or failing would result in fainting or enslavement.

Fortunately, the "truth" on him was beyond the perception of Low- to Mid-

Sequence Beyonders, and Burman was no exception. Before Lumian could activate the Blood Emperor's residual aura, the Demon Warlock suffered a backlash, nearly incapacitating him.

Moreover, Burman's command over the undead and the protection he received after fainting surpassed typical Warlock capabilities. Even if others could achieve similar effects with learned or invented spells, it wouldn't be to that extent, let alone so effortlessly.

Which evil god's pathway is this? Or has Burman, a Warlock, been corrupted and acquired abnormal traits? That would explain the non-human details on him. After conducting so many resurrection experiments, he wouldn't lack the kind that sacrifices to evil gods…

The illusory vertical eye was undeniably powerful and bizarre. I couldn't withstand it head-on. Were it not for the protection of Mr. Fool's seal, Termiboros, and the lingering aura of the Blood Emperor—all surpassing my current level—I might have met my demise at Burman's hands. Lumian's thoughts raced as he quickly made a guess.

Seizing this moment to counteract the impact of the explosion, he retrieved the golden straw hat from his Traveler's Bag and placed it on his head before disappearing.

Lumian "teleported" to 16 Rue Coreas, the entrance of Fidel Guerra's opulent residence.

While Demon Warlock Burman had the means to escape, the same couldn't be said for this prominent merchant!

If Burman had been in good condition when he fled, Lumian worried that he might return out of professional courtesy and rescue his employer. However, since Burman had been rendered unconscious and taken away by some undead creature, he wouldn't be returning to 16 Rue Coreas. He wouldn't even after waking up either. The more time passed, the more likely Fidel Guerra's house would become a trap for the Demon Warlock.

Hence, Lumian still had time to ponder Burman's Sequence and the non-

human issues he exhibited.

His deliberate delay served a purpose.

If Demon Warlock Burman were to wake up promptly and flee with his employer, Lumian's calculated delay of a minute or two would ensnare both of them.

Standing at the entrance of 16 Rue Coreas, Lumian's brow furrowed slightly.

As a Hunter, he detected a faint scent of blood emanating from inside the house.

After a moment of consideration, Lumian gently pushed open the dark-blue door.

It was unlocked.

The door bore splatters of fresh blood that hadn't fully congealed. It seemed as though someone in a panic had sought refuge here, unlocking the door just before being pursued and torn to pieces.

However, there were no remnants of the corpse to be found.

Lumian halted at the doorway, listening intently. The entire house remained eerily silent.

Did Fidel act swiftly, eliminating those in the know and relocating to safety before Burman could strike me down?

In such a scenario, if Burman's operation proved successful and he uncovered the reasons for my suspicions and if there were others privy to the information, Fidel could use the pretext of a late-night attack by Black Baronet and other pirates, where he nearly lost his life. Escaping wouldn't have been easy before returning here. Alternatively, he might vanish forever, adopting a new identity to embark on a fresh business venture… Lumian pondered this mystery as he navigated past the blood-stained area at the entrance, intending to search the house for clues. His goal was to uncover the exact relationship between Fidel Guerra and Demon Warlock Burman.

Leaving the door slightly ajar, he proceeded towards the staircase, the scent of blood lingering in the air.

Perhaps sensing his approach, heavy footsteps suddenly echoed.

Amidst the rhythmic sounds of footsteps, a figure emerged from the basement, coming into Lumian's line of sight.

It wasn't human, or rather, it couldn't be deemed human any longer.

Standing three to four meters tall, its body comprised fragments from various human corpses. It possessed a mix of feminine curves and masculine traits, sewn together by linen threads, with blood-stained mucus dripping from the joints.

This "person" featured a relatively intact head, with only one source—Fidel Guerra, a mixed-blood Intis and Feynapotter.

The merchant's head didn't align with the body; it was as if a child's head had been placed on a half-giant's neck. Dark brown eyes, vacant yet still filled with fear and confusion, stared out.

Dead? Fidel is dead? Did he turn himself into a monster? Lumian pondered. Just as this thought crossed his mind, the stitched corpse lunged forward, dragging three human leg bones that seemed fused together.

A pale-white flame ignited on the colossal "bone sword."

Lumian's eyes narrowed, and his body abruptly vanished, reappearing instantly behind the massive stitched corpse.

"Ha!"

He opened his mouth and emitted a pale-yellow light.

However, the light struck Fidel's head, failing to disorient him, let alone render him unconscious.

It became apparent that the undead creature was immune to the Spell of Harrumph!

Almost simultaneously, the rapidly running sutured corpse forcefully pivoted, emitting a muffled sound from its throat—a language Lumian didn't understand or a word carrying magical effects.

Lumian's soul trembled, as if cowed by evil and death.

He momentarily froze.

The sutured corpse turned around, advancing with purpose. It raised the colossal "bone sword," burning with pale-white flames, and slashed at Lumian's head.

Lumian, experienced in such situations, mostly stemming from encounters with high-level entities, found the current threat less severe than the consequences of the Demon Warlock's illusory vertical eye.

Just in time, Lumian "woke up," activating the black mark on his right shoulder.

Amidst the howling wind, the colossal "bone sword," engulfed in pale-white flames, struck the afterimage left behind.

This time, Lumian materialized close to the stitched corpse's back, stabbing the Symphony of Hatred retrieved from his Traveler's Bag into it.

With a pfft, the pitch-black bone flute, seemingly fragile, plunged into the stitched corpse's flesh.

The flaxen threads burst open, and chunks of flesh and blood peeled off, revealing a dark-red heart emitting pale-white flames.

Lumian extended his left hand, pressing it against the near-fatal wound. The crimson fireball, nearly white, compressed layer by layer as it was pushed in.

Utilizing the reactive force, Lumian abruptly flew backward, dodging the massive "bone sword" that slashed at him.

Rumble!

In midair, he witnessed crimson, nearly white flames erupt from the sutured corpse, tearing apart the beating heart.

Rumble!

The sutured corpse disintegrated, and the flesh and blood of various humans scattered on the ground.

Bang! Fidel's head landed in a pile of flesh and blood, the blankness giving way to a pained expression.

"Who turned you into this?" Lumian inquired, glancing out the window, sensing that the explosion would likely draw the attention of the patrolling police.

Fidel's head opened its mouth, words muffled and filled with hatred.

"It's—it's Burman!"

"Burman?" Lumian was taken aback. "Were you infighting?"

Fidel's head throbbed with pain as his voice trailed off.

"I thought you were testing me. I wanted to observe for a few more days, b-

but he couldn't wait. He w-wanted to kill you tonight. I didn't agree, and he killed everyone in the house…

"H-he's a true lunatic!"

At this point, Fidel's head lolled, his eyes closed, and he fell silent.

Demon Warlock Burman's mental state is quite problematic… Lumian thought. Is that why he killed his employer's entire household? If he really wanted to kill me, he could have acted alone… Lumian had previously considered whether Fidel would think he was baiting him. For this reason, he deliberately created the illusion that he was baiting Black Baronet to lull Fidel. As for the effect, Lumian didn't care too much. If Fidel didn't take the bait, he would use another method. "Fishing" wasn't the only method in his arsenal.

Unexpectedly, this triggered infighting between Fidel and Burman.

Lumian believed even he couldn't bring himself to do such a thing when his psychological problems were at their worst. That was unless Fidel provoked him, such as pointing out that only a lunatic would believe in resurrection.

Observing the corpse fragments for a while, Lumian noticed no signs of a Beyonder characteristic emerging.

Curse my luck. Burman must have taken it. He shook his head and walked towards the room where the safe might be.

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Chapter 525 - 525 Repair Fee

525 Repair Fee

Lumian wasn't sure if he should attribute the misfortune of Demon Warlock Burman taking the banknotes, coins, and gold from the safe to the Symphony of Hatred. After all, he hadn't arrived at 16 Rue Coreas and hadn't utilized General Philip's blackened bone flute. Its abilities likely weren't potent enough to rewind the past.

However, Fidel, living up to his title as a prominent merchant, had numerous wallets stashed in various clothes. Lumian conducted a quick search, revealing a total of 30,000 verl d'or.

This provided a modicum of relief for his "psychological injury."

Upon hearing the arrival of a carriage outside, Lumian left Fidel's bedroom and turned to the adjacent room. He suspected it was the patrolling constables here to investigate the recent explosion.

The room was clean and tidy, yet a faint, uncomfortable smell lingered—the stench of decaying corpses.

Entering the room felt like stepping into a catacomb, surrounded by the marks of his own kind and their deaths, creating an uneasy atmosphere.

This should be Demon Warlock Burman's room. It allows him to protect Fidel in the shortest time possible, heh heh, but he ultimately killed him… This story tells us that the most important condition for choosing a bodyguard is mental stability… Lumian mused as he surveyed every corner of the room.

At that moment, the constables had already pushed open the house's door, revealing spilled blood and scattered flesh.

One of them swiftly drew his revolver, while the other blew a whistle, producing a piercing sound.

Lumian's gaze focused on the blackened marks in the room. The blood, suspected to be old, emitted a sinister aura.

"Burman once killed a special creature in this room to complete a resurrection experiment?" Lumian muttered to himself.

He didn't assume it was Demon Warlock Burman's blood because he believed that the other party wouldn't leave behind such a crucial item when he had enough

time.

If a Beyonder skilled in curses obtained it, Burman would be in grave danger unless he had a way to sever the connection in advance.

In contrast, Burman's blood and flesh were more likely to be found in the master bedroom of Room 5 of the Flying Bird's first-class cabin. The Demon Warlock had suffered severe injuries from the explosion and the flames.

Of course, the blanket explosion and subsequent intense combustion might have rendered the ingredients for cursing inactive.

Lumian crouched down and retrieved a glass bottle from his Traveler's Bag. He scraped away the black marks on the wall and stored them inside.

After completing his task, Lumian cleared any potential traces—hair, skin, and other items. He activated the black mark on his right shoulder and vanished from 16 Rue Coreas before more constables and official Beyonders arrived.

Upon returning to the Flying Bird, he immediately inspected the previous battlefield, now reduced to ruins, scattered with charred and shattered remnants. Metal walls bore marks of distortions and minor cracks, remnants of the intense encounter.

The lingering gasses from the burning carpet and items slowly dissipated through the open window.

After Burman triggered the trap at the exit, the Bottle of Fiction had dissipated.

Lumian focused on examining the windowsill, finding charred remnants.

Phew… Exhaling deeply, he departed Room 5 of the first-class cabin, descending to the deck.

Philip, the security supervisor, leaned against the shipboard, gazing at the night view.

Where's your lover?" Lumian approached Philip, resting his hands on the shipboard.

Philip sighed and replied, "Her destination is Port Farim. Apparently, she was heading to a relative's plantation to assist them."

"Something to celebrate. This means you'll have a new lover," Lumian said, adopting the tone of a Dandyism believer.

"Please allow me to be downcast for another two days," Philip responded, not objecting to Lumian's words but emphasizing his invested feelings.

Of course, it was just a little.

“Did you just return from the port? Why didn’t I see you board the ship?” Philip inquired, following his professional instincts.

“I’ve been in my room the whole time. There was a minor accident at the party just now that set the master bedroom ablaze. Many things were burned. Get someone to fix it promptly tomorrow,” Lumian explained, seeking Philip’s assistance in resolving the situation. Despite the possibility of staying in the fire-damaged room, Lumian preferred to take action to rectify the situation.

Philip appeared confused. “Party… Ablaze… What did you do in the room? I didn’t hear anything…”

Lumian grinned and responded, “A passionate guest made an appearance. Their actions were a bit extreme.”

“Really?” Philip inquired subconsciously.

“No,” Lumian admitted straightforwardly. “Do you want to hear the real reason?”

Philip fell silent. After a few seconds, he said, “There’s a need for compensation for such damage. We’ll charge you the repair fee.

“Fortunately, we’re still in Port Farim. We can replenish various items immediately. Otherwise, it would have been quite troublesome.”

Lumian handed over a stack of banknotes.

“This is the repair fee. I hope it can be completed by tomorrow. If it’s too much, consider it a tip. If it’s too little, ask me for more.”

Philip took the money, frowning as he weighed the stack of banknotes.

“What did you do to the bedroom?”

Why is he giving so much for the repairs?

Is this hush money?

Lumian smiled, turned around, and returned to Room 5 of the first-class cabin.

Observing him disappear through the cabin entrance, Philip counted the stack of banknotes under the crimson moonlight and the gas street lamps at the port.

“2,000 verl d’or? Did he blow up that room?” Philip was shocked and suspicious.

But I didn’t hear anything…

That night, Lumian slept in a recliner in the living room.

Initially planning to summon Jenna's Rabbit Chasel and write Franca a letter about the Demon Warlock, seeking her help with Magic Mirror Divination to identify the source of the old blood in Burman's room. However, he remembered that Franca might still be awake while Jenna was already asleep.

Patiently waiting until the morning, Lumian set up the ritual using "Rabbit-

shaped spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a runner who pursues knowledge, a messenger that belongs solely to the Seven of Cups" to summon the book-holding transparent creature resembling a rabbit with powerful legs.

Today's Rabbit Chasel, unlike the last time, wore a pair of indistinct gold-

rimmed glasses.

Handing the letter and the glass bottle containing the blood and powder to Rabbit Chasel, Lumian asked curiously, "Why are you suddenly wearing glasses? Is this the downside of knowledge?"

Behind the gold-rimmed glasses, Rabbit Chasel's eyes glinted sharply.

"No, I learned this from a novel given by the Seven of Cups."

"What novel did she give you?" Lumian inquired, having a hunch.

"The last time I helped you deliver a letter to her, she didn't have any other books with her, so she could only lend me one of her newly purchased collections." Rabbit Chasel adjusted its gold-rimmed glasses on the bridge of its nose. "That novel is called 'The Adventurer 1: First Show of Strength.'"

As expected, Lumian thought. So, that's why you learned to wear glasses? He didn't know how to comment on this matter.

After Rabbit Chasel left, Ludwig and Lugano woke up one after another,

with the former casting a glance at Lumian's bedroom before eating his pre-

breakfast snacks. Lugano, however, seemed puzzled.

"Was there a fire last night?"

Why don't I know?

Lumian chuckled.

"It happened while you were engrossed with a certain lady. I quickly resolved it."

"Is that so…" Lugano reined in his disbelief.

Choosing to explore local delicacies in Port Farim rather than enjoying the ship's breakfast, Lumian disembarked.

Shortly after, Philip, the security supervisor, arrived with a dining cart.

Standing in the doorway of the charred bedroom, Philip was stunned.

You call this a minor accident?

Even if it was blasted by cannons, it couldn't be in a worse state, right?

Was he planning to dismantle the entire ship?

Uh, such destructive power actually didn't affect the room's exterior. Even the damage to the walls is within repairable limits… I didn't hear anything either…

What had Louis Berry done in the room last night?

No wonder he gave 2,000 verl d'or!

At that instant, Philip's blood surged into his brain.

…

In the Sun Square open-air market of Port Farim, Lumian enjoyed a tortilla filled with various fruit cubes and sipped a peculiar coffee laced with salt as he leisurely strolled through the stalls.

Occasionally, he treated himself to a roasted sausage, relishing the sizzling, oily delicacy.

Approaching the end of the open-air market, he encountered Batna Comté.

The well-dressed adventurer's eyes lit up as he approached Lumian and whispered, "Something happened to your employer!"

Curious, Lumian inquired, "What happened?"

He wanted to know how the official Beyonders had publicized this matter.

"It's that Demon Warlock. He killed Fidel's family and all his servants!" Batna's relief was evident; he hadn't been present yesterday and was glad to have avoided potential danger.

The evidence does seem to point toward the Demon Warlock… The authorities must have shared all the details… Lumian smiled at Batna and remarked, "So, everyone at 16 Rue Coreas fell victim to the Demon Warlock?"

"Yes," Batna confirmed with a solemn nod.

Lumian glanced at him and joked, “Remember how I blindfolded myself yesterday, hoping fate would guide me to uncover clues left behind by a Demon Warlock? Do you recall where we ended up?”

Batna was momentarily taken aback before muttering, “16 Rue Coreas…”

Suddenly, he looked up at Lumian in shock and fear.

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Chapter 526 - 526 Resolution

526 Resolution

526 Resolution

The destination was Demon Warlock Burman's next target!

Without waiting for Lumian's response, the adventurer mumbled to himself in puzzlement, "Are you a Blessed of luck?"

No, a Blessed of calamity… Lumian replied inwardly.

As thoughts raced, Batna suddenly formulated a new hypothesis.

Could this be Demon Warlock Burman himself?

He had investigated the explosion scene, returning to flaunt his prowess at the crime scene and blindfolded himself to randomly choose the next victim!

Such an explanation seemed far more plausible than being blessed with luck!

Lumian glanced at Batna's Batna's tense expression and smiled.

"Don't tell me you think I'm Burman? How long have I been in Port Farim?"

That's exactly it. Something happened the night you first arrived in Port Farim… Batna didn't dare vocalize it.

"When the Quartier des Black Pearls exploded, I was still praying in the cathedral," Lumian said with amusement, providing an alibi.

Batna pondered for a moment and relaxed, but confusion still lingered on his face.

Lumian sighed and inquired, "Yesterday, I didn't expect to encounter anything related to the Demon Warlock while walking blindfolded. I just found it fun."

He spoke the truth.

However, he couldn't shake the suspicion that the corruption caused by 0-01 might be more severe than he had imagined.

Of course, he couldn't rule out the possibility that Trier, a seal from the Fourth Epoch, had effectively suppressed the preexisting issues within him.

The excuse of finding it “fun” barely convinced Batna. He felt that Louis Berry was undoubtedly such a person.

Yet, the other party would sporadically set traps just for the amusement of it. Anyone treating him as an idiot would end up becoming one!

“Perhaps I was truly blessed by luck yesterday,” Lumian concluded.

Lumian’s reasoning convinced Batna that Demon Warlock Burman’s continuous evasion and access to resources stemmed from his close symbiotic relationship with Fidel, a prominent merchant. The subsequent tragedy likely resulted from the pressure exerted by the official Beyonders’ investigation, leading to internal strife.

“What a shame…” Batna sighed. “If I had sold the clues about the Demon Warlock’s close connection to Fidel to the authorities beforehand, I could’ve bagged a hefty bounty.”

It would’ve been at least 5,000 verl d’or!

Batna shook his head.

“No, without evidence, the authorities won’t buy it. Can’t tell them we stumbled on clues blindfolded, blessed by luck. They’d just cuff us for being fraudsters.”

A chuckle slipped from Lumian’s lips.

“Can’t you fabricate some evidence to back the clues?

“Say you spotted someone suspicious at Fidel’s back door, maybe the Demon Warlock. Let the official Beyonders confirm it themselves. They’ll uncover the truth in due time.”

“T-That’d work?” Batna’s mouth hung slightly agape.

“Why not?” Lumian grinned. “If you truly found the Demon Warlock, tell them not to sweat the details. Just ask if the clues are legit and if they helped capture the Demon Warlock. If they miss Burman, it’s a small scam at worst. Few days of hard labor for you.”

“Official Beyonders can take tips from adventurers without solid certainty, right? They’d miss genuine info otherwise.”

Lumian’s words left Batna silent momentarily before he blurted out, “Don’t tell me you’ve got Islander blood?”

Deception seemed to be his forte.

Lumian casually replied, “Knew an Islander in Trier, quite the con artist with rich experience and techniques.”

With a flicker of interest, Lumian raised his left hand, pinching his left eye socket.

Glancing at Batna, he asked, “How long have you been adventuring? Why still so green?”

“Over a year,” Batna defended himself. “It’s just that I stick to the rules with authorities. I’m more adaptable when dealing with pirates and others.”

“Adventurers slipping clues to authorities also dabble in deceit, right?” Lumian grinned. “They scam if they can.”

He suspected Batna’s strict adherence to rules came from a well-bred background, a notion confirmed by the other party’s attire and appearance.

Observing Batna’s silence, Lumian finished his remaining salted coffee and glanced back at the lively open-air market.

“Try not to go to the morgue, cemetery, or other places for the time being.”

Just as Batna was about to ask why, he instantly grasped the advice’s true meaning.

Without Fidel to provide resources, the Demon Warlock might feel compelled to take action!

…

Before long, his messenger, Penitent Baynfel, emerged from the void and handed him a letter.

Franca:

“Based on your latest account and my discussion with 007 last night, I suspect that Demon Warlock Burman had been compelled to switch Sequences.

“He was originally a Warlock, but to revive his wife, he switched to the neighboring Death pathway. He went half-mad, becoming half-human and half-monster.

“Though this could be explained as a Warlock receiving an evil god’s boon, your situation doesn’t align. No cases of Beyonder powers from two pathways fusing and mutating have been documented. This was evident in your clash with Burman. The Eye of Illusory you mentioned has the Eye of Mystery Prying, revealing the side of reality, but it also displays the Death pathway’s suppression of the Spirit Body or even enslavement.

“As far as I know, the Death pathway gains an Eye of Death ability at Sequence 8 Gravedigger. Did it fuse with the Eye of Mystery Prying, forming that distinctive Eye of Illusory?”

As Lumian read, he suddenly recalled the appearance of the Eye of Illusory.

Embedded vertically in his forehead, illusory and blurry, a deep purple bordering on black, with numerous pale-white patterns—undeniably a fusion of the Eye of Mystery Prying and the Death pathway's abilities.

Lumian's gaze shifted downward as he continued reading.

"White feather-like fur, decaying wounds, control over various undead creatures, unstable emotional states, and extreme actions—all indirectly confirming my hypothesis…

"The origins of the old blood are rather peculiar. I've conducted Magic Mirror Divination several times and consulted various entities, but all I've gleaned is that it stems from the depths of the spirit world. No further information. It seems the irreversible half-mad Burman had some other fortuitous encounter."

Unstable emotions… Extreme actions… irreversible half-madness… Lumian mulled over the descriptions and let out an inaudible sigh.

How determined and desperate must Burman have been when he chose to consume the Death pathway potion?

Wild Beyonders didn't know they could switch to neighboring pathways at a specific Sequence. They believed once a divine pathway was chosen, it couldn't be altered. Forced consumption of potions from other pathways led to madness or death.

Moreover, Mystery Pryer and Death weren't adjacent pathways that allowed switching.

Burman wouldn't have drunk the Death pathway potion without a resolve bordering on death, all to revive his wife, even at the cost of his sanity.

Lumian sensed he might have made the same choice in such a situation, hence his conflicting emotions.

Franca's letter ended with reassurance: "Don't fret over the aftermath. Burman's mental state will soon cause him to resurface without Fidel's support and restraint. He might succeed once or twice in gathering materials for experiments, but it won't last. Official Beyonders will eliminate him within weeks or even days."

Lumian glanced at Penitent Baynfel, yet to depart.

"Help me deliver my reply to the sender."

Swiftly, he penned a line: "I'll kill Burman as soon as possible."

Before long, Penitent Baynfel returned with Franca's reply: "Why?"

Lumian wrote on the same piece of paper: “I wish to punish him for his crimes…”

He paused for a moment before continuing, “And end his pain.”

Folding the letter into a square, Lumian handed it to Baynfel and glanced at the messenger.

“Don’t you find it troublesome to send letters back and forth?”

It wasn’t concern but puzzlement.

After delivering the letter, Penitent Baynfel didn’t leave immediately. Instead, he waited for a potential reply.

This time, Baynfel didn’t remain silent. He replied in a deep voice, “Being busy makes me feel better. It’s better to have something to do than always watch the darkness.”

Lumian listened quietly without responding, watching Penitent Baynfel turn and walk into the void.

He empathized with those words.

Franca didn’t stop Lumian. Her reply was concise and forceful: “Be careful!”

Phew… Lumian exhaled and walked to the living room window, casting his gaze at Port Farim bathed in the blazing sunlight and the distant Andatna volcano.

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Chapter 527 - 527 Immersion

527 Immersion

527 Immersion

Under the sunlight, Port Farim appeared to be tinged with a golden hue, and the air seemed to carry the sweetness of cane sugar.

Lumian lingered by the window, contemplating the whereabouts of the Demon Warlock.

During his rescue the previous night, Burman had slipped into a deep coma, unable to direct the undead creature he controlled. Therefore, the undead being must have relied on its instincts and routines to transport Burman to a safe haven he frequented.

Ordinarily, Fidel's residence would be his top choice. Yet, when Lumian scoured the premises, there were no traces indicating Burman's return.

His initial assumption was that Burman had employed the undead creatures to eliminate Fidel's family, attendants, and servants. Recognizing 16 Rue Coreas as a battlefield and unsafe, they likely sought an alternate hideout.

Where could that be?

From his Traveler's Bag, Lumian retrieved the information Franca had provided about Burman and the rest of the details gathered from Philip, Batna, and the others. He read through it again, attempting to immerse himself in the mindset of the Demon Warlock, simulating his thoughts, actions, and motivations.

Burman hailed from Fog Province, also known as Winter Province, situated in the northern part of Intis. Bordering the Feysac Empire, the region had relatively rustic folk customs, with a penchant for strong liquor.

His wife, Helen, a Port Farim native without Islander heritage, had a grandfather who worked as a cane sugar merchant traveling between Port Farim and Port LeSeur. Unfortunately, he encountered pirates, losing most of his business and relying on a plantation he had previously acquired.

Born and raised on that plantation, Helen witnessed its sale due to conflicts among her father's generation after her grandfather's death. Her family received a portion of the money and relocated to Port Farim. After her father's passing and her mother falling ill, she became an adventurer and crossed paths with Burman.

Both had experienced fortuitous encounters during their adventures, gaining superpowers. They even acquired property in Port Farim, planning a future away from the adventurous life as they grew older.

Several years ago, they, along with a group of fellow adventurers, rented a boat to explore the seas for treasure. Unfortunately, they encountered sea monsters, and only Burman and two others survived.

Following this tragic incident, Burman's attempts to revive his wife took a progressively desperate turn.

"Treasure hunting at sea? Are there really that many treasures at sea?" Lumian mumbled, convinced that it was highly likely Burman was still in Port Farim.

This place held his dearest memories, remnants of the years spent with his wife, Helen. When selecting a hiding spot, he would instinctively lean towards this area.

With this in mind, Lumian continued reading the latter part of the intel.

As anticipated, Burman's past dangerous experiments had unfolded near the Fog Sea Archipelago, encompassing other islands and the villages and towns along the Northern Continent's coast. If he connected them into irregular concentric circles, the center would be in Port Farim on Saint Tick Island.

Burman uses Port Farim as a base for resurrection attempts in various places… Lumian pondered. He hasn't stirred trouble in Port Farim before, so why the exception this time? If I were Burman in his half-mad state, I'd treat Port Farim as my spiritual home, a haven of beautiful memories. Typically, I wouldn't disrupt the order here. I might even secretly maintain it and handle some audacious pirates and adventurers on the sly… Lumian analyzed thoughtfully.

He had substituted Port Farim with Cordu. Believing that if his sister's death had no connection to Cordu and the peace remained, anyone daring to disturb Cordu's daily life and alter the situation would be his enemy!

Frowning slightly, he sensed there might be crucial details unclear about the previous night's explosion. There could be a reason why Burman killed Fidel and his family beyond a mere disagreement. Fidel, having collaborated with Burman for years, should have known about his unstable mental state. How could such a shrewd merchant not consider the potential repercussions of his words on the Demon Warlock?

Moreover, Burman aimed to eliminate the adventurer Louis Berry to conceal his collaboration with Fidel. If Fidel was already dead, why silence Lumian?

Perhaps, Fidel had assumed he could persuade Burman to wait a few days before acting, only to find Burman already in a deranged state, driven by instinct.

After careful consideration, Lumian decided to re-enter Port Farim and visit Burman and Helen's former residence.

Even though Burman had sold it long ago to fund his resurrection experiments and it was under official Beyonder scrutiny, there remained a possibility of discovering crucial clues.

What if the mad Burman insisted on returning to his previous abode?

Instructing Lugano to keep an eye on Ludwig, Lumian descended to the deck and encountered Philip.

The Flying Bird's security supervisor regarded Lumian with a mixed expression. Without mentioning the room that seemed to have been bombarded by cannons, he stated, "I'll distribute the remaining repair fees to the participating workers and attendants."

The implication was clear: "I've already compensated those who need to be silenced."

"You can take a share yourself," Lumian replied with a smile.

Philip shook his head and sighed.

"Not having any more incidents like that on the way from Port Farim to Port Santa would be the best reward for me."

"I'll do my best," Lumian sincerely assured him.

He refrained from making promises, acknowledging factors beyond his control.

He also looked forward to reaching Port Santa without trouble and beginning the hunt for the key members of April Fool's—Bard and Ultraman.

Philip gazed at Lumian for a few seconds, as if contemplating whether to report him in advance.

He sighed again.

"The port lockdown will be lifted tonight. The Flying Bird will set sail again tomorrow morning. Don't miss it."

Lumian nodded and asked curiously, "The Demon Warlock has been apprehended?"

"No, but it's pretty much confirmed that it has nothing to do with the ships at the port. Nor is he hiding here," Philip replied nonchalantly. "Burman even killed the prominent merchant Fidel's family last night. They seemed to be in a cooperative relationship. Perhaps Fidel wanted to betray him…"

At this point, Philip gave Lumian a sharp glance.

"Last night, the battle in your room—could it be related to this?"

“What kind of connection do you think there will be?” Lumian asked, amused.

Philip pondered for a moment and couldn’t make the connection.

Observing this, Lumian waved his hand and donned his golden straw hat. He descended the gangway to the docks and left the port district.

As Lumian reached Sun Square, adorned with numerous wanted posters, he was approached by an Islander man with brownish-black skin, sunken eyes, and a deep-set gaze. The man handed him a folded book with a plethora of words and crude patterns printed on it.

“Traveler, this is Port Farim’s travel guide. It lists scenic spots, unique delicacies, and sexual entertainment venues,” the Islander introduced with zeal. “It’ll make your stay here more enjoyable.”

Lumian played along and asked, “How much?”

“It’s free! I’ll give it to you for free!” the Islander exclaimed in a high-pitched voice. “The government prints these for tourists, hoping for a positive impression of Port Farim.”

“Awesome.” Lumian accepted the guidebook with an expression of “pleasant surprise” and unfolded it.

The guide detailed scenic views and recommendations from various shops—sugar cane outlets, sexual entertainment venues, renowned eateries, and more.

Suddenly, Lumian swiftly drew his revolver and pressed it against the Islander’s forehead.

The Islander froze, stunned. After a few seconds, he stammered, “No, no charge. I’m not lying!”

Was this minor situation worth a gun being drawn?

I’m going to call the police!

Lumian smiled and inquired, “What’s the connection between these recommended shops and you?”

“No…” The Islander felt the chill of the gun and carefully changed his words. “Th-they paid us to recommend them. Some of them are owned by our partners.”

“How many are legitimate shops?” Lumian pressed, undeterred.

“90%.” Just as the Islander finished speaking, Lumian cocked the revolver’s hammer, sending a clear message.

He hastily added, “90% of them are connected to us.”

Lumian chuckled, continuing with another question, “What about the scenery?”

“50%. Only the plantations and primitive tribes are connected to us.” The Islander trembled in fear.

Lumian shook the travel guide and smiled at the Islander.

“Show me the real ones.”

The Islander quickly pointed out different parts, worried that the gun might misfire.

Only then did Lumian stow away his revolver and take the guidebook to the open-air market on the other side of Sun Square.

He had engaged the Islander partly to frighten the swindler and partly because a new idea had struck him.

For Burman, who had resided in Port Farim for many years, were some of the delicacies and scenery here also part of his cherished memories?

During setbacks, when he killed his best partner and faced defeat in battle, would he, driven by madness and paranoia, seek out places with beautiful memories to draw strength and recharge?

Lumian believed if he were in Burman’s shoes, he would have done the same.

Reason might suggest that he could be tracked and discovered, but half-mad individuals often ignored reason.

Therefore, whether it was the moonlit scenery of the lighthouse, the setting sun behind the volcano, Reptow minced pork, Gasparo seafood rice, or Saint Tick chocolate ice cream, all could attract the covert patronage of the Demon Warlock.

In his current state, there was a high chance that he wouldn’t meticulously erase his tracks.

Adjusting his golden straw hat, Lumian made his way through the open-air market, heading toward the cliff mountain outside Farim, where Port Farim’s lighthouse stood.

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Chapter 528 - 528 Treasure Legend

528 Treasure Legend

The crash of azure waves echoed against the cliff's base, creating a cascade of white flowers in their wake.

Approaching the lighthouse, Lumian pondered its rumored history, a relic left behind by the Intisians upon their arrival at Saint Tick Island, his gaze fixating on the distant sea.

The night's crimson moonlight, still hours away, refrained from casting its dreamy glow, rendering the scene quiet and undisturbed by tourists.

Circling the lighthouse reminiscent of Roselle's era, Lumian observed for nearly fifteen minutes, fruitlessly searching for any sign of the Demon Warlock.

He didn't anticipate a direct encounter with Burman; it wasn't yet the time to admire the moon. Lumian simply sought to discern if Burman would visit to reminisce about the past and his wife after waking up last night—a moment of solace to steady his heart and find the strength to persevere.

The lighthouse guardian, with a pipe emitting the aroma of roasted tobacco leaves, offered a friendly reminder, "Kid, there's nothing much to see here during the day. It's a whole different story at night."

Lumian smiled and inquired, "Do people come in the middle of the night?"

"Indeed," the 50-year-old guardian boasted. "Those Trier playboys love bringing their dates here to bask in the moonlight."

"Any mysterious figures, perhaps someone donning a hood and pretending to be a Warlock?" Lumian pressed on.

The lighthouse guardian's face betrayed a nostalgic expression.

"Sometimes. Thought it was a ghostly silhouette a few times."

"Did such a figure visit late last night?" Lumian queried, a subtle curl forming on his lips.

There was nothing wrong with his speculation from his immersion!

Perhaps his similar experiences allowed him to better understand Burman's mental state and paranoid thoughts.

The guardian replied, “Can’t say for sure. I didn’t see anything.”

Lumian didn’t press further. He decided to return in the early morning hours, the enchanting few hours beneath the moonlight.

Over the next three hours, he explored the truly renowned gourmet restaurants in Port Farim. Despite asking similar questions, Lumian obtained no valuable information.

It became apparent that Demon Warlock Burman exercised restraint under normal circumstances, avoiding impulsive actions. He seldom frequented crowded places, and when he did, his disguise was impeccable.

By 4 p.m., Lumian reached Port Farim’s modest steam locomotive station. He spent 3 verl d’or for a ticket bound for the Andatna volcano mine.

If he aimed to witness the sunset there, the journey had to commence now.

Woosh! Clunk! Clunk! Clunk! The iron-black carriage belched thick smoke as it lumbered along the railway sleepers.

Gradually, it gained momentum, akin to a colossal giant overcoming inertia and mobilizing its components.

Seated by the window, Lumian held a golden straw hat, quietly admiring the vanishing plantations.

Shortly before 6 p.m., the train halted outside Andatna’s volcanic mine.

Adorning his straw hat, Lumian bypassed the mine entrance, opting for a nearby trail leading to the volcano’s summit.

As the greenery dwindled, grayish-black hues prevailed. Occasional red rocks punctuated the landscape.

Approaching the mountaintop, desolation intensified. Grayish-black gravel lay dormant in the hushed wind.

Without the shelter of foliage, Lumian’s vision expanded. The peculiar grandeur of this place seemed to embody the vastness of desolation and silence.

Following the tourist-worn grayish-black path, Lumian advanced step by step toward the volcano’s mouth, revealing coal-black surfaces with reddish depressions.

The temperature inside was notably warmer.

Unbridled winds stirred, sending grayish-black gravel airborne, causing human forms to sway.

In this spectacle, the nearly setting sun bathed the desolate surroundings in a golden-red glow, intensifying the sunken redness.

Pressing down on his straw hat, Lumian ventured two to three hundred meters along the volcano's crater.

Abruptly, the mountaintop wind subsided, and the suspended gravel settled in eerie silence.

Lumian immediately spotted a figure standing silently on the grayish-black diagonal wall outside the volcano's crater, bathed in the last radiant sunlight.

Cloaked in black robes and a deep hood, the figure attentively watched the gradual descent of the golden-red sun.

Lumian's expression remained unchanged as he advanced step by step, refraining from initiating an attack.

Sensing Lumian's approach, the hooded figure turned around, unveiling a pale-white face marked by decaying wounds and a wide swath of fur.

It was none other than Demon Warlock Burman!

Perhaps influenced by the serene scenery and haunting memories, Burman, known for his madness, spoke wearily, "You've actually found this place."

Lumian, who had been securing his golden straw hat against the strong wind, chuckled self-deprecatingly and responded,

"If not for my illusions and hope, and if I didn't have numerous enemies awaiting my discovery, I would frequently return to Cordu and the nearest high mountain pasture. The grass there is vividly green, vast and expansive, with pale-yellow flowers in full bloom. Countless sheep roam about. The sky mirrors the brilliance of gems, and the occasional drifting white clouds resemble sheep grazing on the ground. At night, the stars emerge, densely packed like diamond gravel at the bottom of a clear river…"

Standing amidst the blazing sunlight and the vast, silent grayish-black surroundings, Lumian couldn't help but reminisce about Cordu Village and the alpine pasture.

Burman didn't interrupt. After Lumian finished speaking, he wore a dazed expression and uttered with a smile more pained than joyful,

"Helen and I thought we could come here to watch the sunset whenever we pleased since it's just a ticket away. But she never came again…"

And you don't even need to take the steam locomotive… Lumian sighed slowly and said, "What happened back then?"

Burman's face contorted in distortion, the agony evident in his expression.

"We were deceived. Something was wrong with the treasure map. We encountered real sea monsters!

"Damn the Islanders. Helen always believed they resorted to deceit and thuggery out of necessity. All the respectable positions were held by pure Intisians, but we treated them well and placed our trust in them. Yet, they colluded with others to betray us for money!

"I'll kill him, those deceivers, and every Islander!"

Lumian chuckled and remarked, "Some of the self-proclaimed noble Trieriens are swindlers, while others sell their bodies. I don't generalize against Islanders, but I remain cautious of specific individuals."

Suddenly, Lumian felt inspired.

"Was the Islander who betrayed you from the Marauder pathway?"

"Yes." Burman's face twitched with unrestrained anger.

Was it a Swindler acting? Lumian asked cautiously, "Did he have a tendency to wear monocles or pinch his eye socket?"

He pointed at his right eye.

"No." Burman seemed perplexed by Lumian's question.

Lumian heaved a sigh of relief.

"What's his name? Did you manage to kill him?"

Burman's pale face suddenly flushed, and decaying liquid dripped down.

"His name is Mark Benito! After that incident, he vanished. I never found him!"

Lumian chose not to provoke Burman further and inquired, "Which treasure were you seeking back then?"

"In the depths of the Fog Sea, there's an island. The inhabitants there don't age or truly die," Burman recalled the treasure rumors he had gathered. "There's reason to believe that something incredibly precious is hidden on that island. We didn't want to become enemies with the islanders. Our only hope was to infiltrate the island and steal some ageless medicine."

His words were somewhat disorganized, skipping over details.

"It bears a striking resemblance to the legend of the Fountain of Unaging," Lumian remarked after pondering. "The Adventurer series has already hinted that

the Fountain of Unaging is a falsehood."

Ignoring him, Burman continued, "We found some evidence and obtained a treasure map to the island. To our surprise, the map was a forgery!

"The sea monsters wrecked our ship. In order to allow me to utilize that special witchcraft, Helen stood in front of me… I witnessed her torn into two by the sea monsters. I saw despair in her eyes…"

Burman panted heavily, unable to continue.

"And then, you switched to the Death pathway?" Lumian changed the topic.

Burman's icy flaxen-colored eyes gleamed.

"That's correct. Only Death, who controls the Death domain, can bring Helen back!

"In the treasure legend, many details suggest that only Death can achieve eternal life. Understanding the mysteries of death is the key to true resurrection! It's not that the islanders won't die; they can be revived!"

"Do you genuinely believe in that treasure?" Lumian already had an answer in mind after posing the question.

The partially unhinged Burman clung to every lifeline, trusting every rumor that promised to bring Helen back to life.

"I do." Burman nodded and spoke with a deep voice, "That's because I encountered people from that island some time ago. There really is such an island. There are truly islanders who don't age or truly die!"

"Really?" Lumian blurted out.

Burman's eyes burned with fanaticism as he declared, "I wanted to capture him, but he defeated me. Instead of killing me, he sympathized with my plight and imparted some knowledge about the Death domain. There's a way to bring Helen back to life!

"That cursed swindler. Fidel's attendant is nothing but a swindler. I didn't intend to rush the resurrection ritual. I wasn't fully prepared, but since he's a swindler, I'll kill him! All Islanders are swindlers! They all deserve to die!"

Is he truly from that island? Or could he be another swindler? Lumian realized that the incident with the swindler, Roddy, had triggered Burman. There was also the influence of that islander… Lumian narrowed his eyes and inquired, "What's the islander's name, and what does he look like?"

Burman suddenly became cautious, scrutinizing Lumian.

"What brings you here?"

Observing Burman's reaction, Lumian sighed and, with abnormal composure, said, "I'm here to kill you."

Burman was taken aback before bursting into laughter.

"For what? A bounty?"

Discarding the golden straw hat in his hand, Lumian lowered his body slightly and replied in a deep voice, "Punish your sins and put an end to your suffering."

Burman ceased his laughter and raised his hands with a cold expression.

"Bring it on, then."

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Chapter 529 - 529 Irrational

529 Irrational

529 Irrational

His body began to fade, growing more transparent, as if he had transformed into a being from the spirit world—difficult for ordinary people to perceive.

In the blink of an eye, the Demon Warlock vanished.

Lumian made no move to intervene or evade potential attacks. Calmly, he retrieved the Flog boxing gloves adorned with iron-black spikes from his Traveler's Bag and wore them.

Completing this preparation, he suddenly knelt on one knee, pressing his hands to the ground.

Crimson flames erupted in all directions from Lumian's body, accompanied by a series of explosions.

Amidst the rumbling, flames surged, dominating the grayish-black wilderness. Burman's black-robed figure materialized in midair.

He slowly floated towards Lumian, narrowing the distance between them.

Lumian's figure abruptly vanished, reappearing behind Burman.

Spirit World Traversal!

Without hesitation, Lumian, holding a crimson fireball in his left hand, harrumphed.

Two beams of white light shot out from his nose, targeting Burman.

Floating in midair, Burman didn't lose consciousness as before. His body swayed, forcefully turning around to observe Lumian descending into the sea of flames on the ground.

An illusory vertical eye, dark purple and nearly black, materialized between Burman's brows, reflecting Lumian's figure amid pale-white patterns.

Almost simultaneously, a lanky black shadow emerged from within Burman's body. Nearby, arms made of bones or decayed flesh and pus extended from the void, encircling Burman's transparent and thin form.

He hadn't used witchcraft to quietly approach Lumian and strike. Instead, he had clandestinely swapped his spirit with the undead under his command, setting a trap to entice the enemy into deploying that peculiar spell to attack his body.

In such a scenario, the absence of one's Spirit Body meant immunity to abilities targeting the Soul Body!

Burman could then seize the opportunity to use the Eye of the Spirit to intimidate the enemy and create an opening for the manipulated undead.

This time, he refrained from delving deeper into the secret of the other party's Spirit Body. His goal was to uncover its vulnerabilities, strike with a lethal blow, and absorb the corresponding mystical knowledge!

Having suffered greatly from the Spell of Harrumph the previous night, he had used this ability as a breakthrough from the beginning.

Simultaneously, Lumian experienced once again the sensation of his spirit being intimidated and suppressed, as if frozen. Terrifying arms covered in festering warts or with eyes extended from the void, reaching out for his body.

Boom!

The explosion's force was mostly mitigated by the Flog boxing gloves, but since they weren't fully covered, the exposed part of Lumian's left palm was turned into a bloody mess.

An intense and familiar pain shot through his brain and Spirit Body, bringing him back to awareness.

Seizing this moment of clarity, Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder again, vanishing above the sea of flames and disappearing from the strange undead arms extending from the void.

Likewise, he remained vigilant against Burman's Eye of Illusory.

The crimson, nearly white fireball in his left hand was structurally unstable. He had to divert his attention to maintain it, and he couldn't sustain it when affected by the Eye of Illusory, leading to its natural disintegration and a self-

inflicted awakening.

If this failed to disrupt the Eye of Illusory's intimidation, the sea of flames below served as Lumian's second preparation. The residual aura of the Blood Emperor in his right hand was his last resort.

Upon vanishing, Lumian reappeared behind Burman once more.

Prepared, Burman raised his hands and scattered a tree-like powder.

Crackling sounds followed as silver-white lightning struck Lumian's head, as though a storm ruler had unleashed divine retribution from the sky.

For most Beyonders, this would be enough to paralyze and make them tremble incessantly. Yet, Lumian showed no such signs. Instead, he appeared like a reflection in the water, shattered by the lightning.

The real Lumian was curled up at the bottom of the figure. Burman had struck the phantom created using the Niese Face!

The Niese Face was essentially an illusion, but it couldn't be cast on others or items. Lumian had to rely on himself, pretending to be a root system with branches and flowers above, forming a derived illusion.

There was no fundamental difference between this and using the Niese Face to make himself taller and bulkier.

Amidst the crackling lightning, two crimson fireballs materialized beneath Lumian's feet and behind him.

Rumble!

The fireball exploded, propelling Lumian towards the levitating Burman.

Burman, being close proximity, couldn't dodge the swift Lumian in time. He could only slightly turn his body as a bone spear sprouted from his shoulder, its tip unusually sharp.

A grin spread across Lumian's face. He didn't evade, allowing the bone spear to pierce his right chest.

With a resounding thud, he swung his left fist, delivering a powerful blow to the side of Burman's face. The Demon Warlock's head twisted, revealing deep blood-stained, pus-filled holes on his face. His eyes burned with rage, as if he were witnessing the murderer of his wife!

The black mark on Lumian's right shoulder emitted a dim light once more.

His figure vanished beside Burman, dissolving into the encircling lanky black shadows and other undead creatures, leaving behind the bone spear stained with his blood.

The wound on his right chest was grotesque, blood dripping from it. In his hand appeared a dark-red bone flute with a hole in it.

Symphony of Hatred!

Lumian brought the bone flute to his lips. As he retreated, he played a mournful and haunting melody.

Once again invoking the Eye of Illusory, Burman, who was on the verge of catching up, was frozen in astonishment. Even the undead ceased their movements.

Suddenly, blood and pus seeped from Burman's eyes, nose, mouth, and ears, as if a muffled and invisible explosion had occurred within him.

His anger, paranoia, and thirst for revenge were fueled by the Symphony of Hatred.

This inflicted a severe blow on him.

Lumian refrained from playing the Symphony of Hatred from the outset because Burman differed from other Beyonders. Others needed to identify the problem, but with Burman, there were too many uncertainties.

His mental state was extremely unstable, burdened by severe psychological issues. His overwhelming desire to revive his wife and seek revenge on the Islander swindler was palpable. His body had undergone modifications from the Death domain, and Lumian had inflicted significant injuries on him the previous night. There were substantial hidden dangers…

Faced with such an adversary, Lumian himself was uncertain about the outcome if he were to unleash the Symphony of Hatred through the shepherd's flute. It might be manageable if it only triggered desires and emotions, but if Burman's mental state lost even the most basic restraints, the Demon Warlock could potentially lose control on the spot, transforming into a monstrous entity with mixed abilities.

Such a monster would likely be even more challenging to deal with than Burman!

Hence, after the Spell of Harrumph failed, Lumian promptly shifted to using Flog boxing gloves to kindle Burman's corresponding desires and emotions. This strategic approach increased the likelihood that when Lumian eventually used the Symphony of Hatred, it would exploit the target's emotions and desires, inflicting severe harm.

Observing Burman descend into the sea of flames amid the eruption of emotions and desires, Lumian executed another Spirit World Traversal, appearing in front of him in an instant.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

He extended his arms, unleashing a relentless barrage of attacks on Burman's body.

On the surface of his Flog fists, a crimson fireball, almost white, compressed layer by layer.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Flog tore at Burman's flesh like a two-headed python.

Rumble!

Crimson fireballs erupted around Lumian, with no concern for waste. They formed a barrier, preventing the lanky figure, strange arms, and other undead from interfering.

One punch, two punches, three punches. Lumian's eyes were fixed on the mangled Burman.

At that moment, he reflected on the village destroyed by Burman and the innocent lives lost because of him.

How many were beloved wives, waiting husbands, dependent parents, and cherished children?

Cordu had been annihilated due to the ambitions of the evil gods. What about the innocent?

Lumian's eyes gradually turned crimson as he clenched his fists.

This time, he didn't empathize with Burman. Instead, he placed himself in the village he had destroyed and the lives he had taken.

Wasn't Cordu like this back then?

The ambitions of these evil gods are to blame!

In just a few seconds, Burman snapped out of his pain and emitted an evil, cold, and incomprehensible voice.

The sound seemed to peel away Lumian's flesh, exposing his Spirit Body to the perilous sunlight and the grayish-black gravel.

Lumian's movements slowed, and the grotesque arms finally reached in, dragging Burman away from the area.

Phew… Lumian exhaled and recovered.

He didn't pursue. Instead, he gazed silently at the void ahead, raised his right hand, and snapped his fingers.

Rumble!

Amidst the sudden eruption of intense flames, Burman's body materialized, shattering from an explosion.

Fire Infusion!

Hunter's Fire Infusion!

In truth, Lumian hadn’t acted rationally. His optimal strategy would have been to seize the moment when Burman’s emotions and desires were ignited and strike at his vital points with the Symphony of Hatred, delivering a decisive blow. However, he yearned to repeatedly pummel the “hidden” version of himself that terrified him!

With a thud, Burman’s head clattered to the ground.

In his daze, he caught sight of a slender figure with black hair, blue eyes, and a delicate face.

It was his wife, Helen.

Y-you’re back? Burman couldn’t help but smile and extend his arm.

He no longer had an arm.

Gradually, he lost consciousness. Darkness enveloped his vision, as if sunlight lurked deep within.

Demon Warlock Burman—dead.

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Chapter 530 - 530 Beginning

530 Beginning

Donning the silver Lie earring and retrieving a white bandage, Lumian wrapped it around the burned wound on his right chest and his bloody left hand.

Crimson flames surged around him, engulfing his dripping blood and splattering flesh.

Throughout this process, Lumian gathered the nearby corpse fragments that Burman had scattered and piled them beside the head.

He had been calculating the time. If Burman's Beyonder characteristic still hadn't materialized, he would have to move the corpse pile to the forest beside the Andatna volcano.

This was because the Flog boxing gloves attracted the attention of certain hidden entities, enabling them to command dangerous creatures to attack.

In the past, Lumian would have had to leave the scene as soon as he finished using the Flog boxing gloves, but the battle lasted only a short time. The Flog boxing gloves had already been stowed into his Traveler's Bag, allowing him to wait a little longer.

Lumian observed various colored light spots—light purple, pale-white, and pitch-black—emerge from Burman's head and the scattered corpse pile. Among the items on the ground and torn clothes, Lumian found a diverse array of objects.

There was a miniature brain, blood-dyed and resembling brass, a retractable pitch-black telescope, ointment and powder in metal canisters, a short bone scepter, a peculiar badge encircling the sun with bones, a soft-cover notebook in an iron box, an ordinary-looking golden ring, and scattered gold and silver coins…

The deposit certificates and paper cash had likely been destroyed by the explosion and the inferno.

Lumian carefully stowed each item away, sensing that three possessed superpowers. Merely coming into contact with them triggered various adverse reactions.

Thankfully, I had no intention of prolonging the battle with Burman from the start… Him using these mystical items later would have been troublesome… To deal with such a half-mad and resourceful enemy, I must end the battle swiftly and deny him a chance to recover… Some items were likely gathered by him, while

others might have been taken from Fidel… Lumian concluded, finally picking up the dented and cracked iron box.

Inside the soft-cover notebook lay a blood-stained treasure map. With a brief glance, Lumian suspected it to be a sea map leading to an island in a specific sea area. It contained records of weather patterns and markings of safe sea routes.

Could this be the fake treasure map sold to Burman by Mark Benito? Lumian mused. Flipping to the first page of the dark soft-cover notebook, he encountered scrawled words:

“My mind isn’t reliable all the time. I tend to forget many things. I must record all relevant knowledge and prevent them from being forgotten.”

Lumian refrained from delving deeper. He carefully stowed away the fake treasure map and the soft-cover notebook.

Lumian noticed an ordinary-looking golden ring adorning Burman’s left ring finger in the corpse pile.

It bore a striking resemblance to the gold rings found in the pile of spoils. They varied in size, texture, and quality.

Lumian instantly grasped the situation.

He removed the golden ring from Burman’s finger and tied it to another golden ring with a piece of wire he had on hand.

At that moment, Burman’s Beyonder characteristics fully materialized, merging with parts of his corpse, resulting in two distinct items.

Lumian carefully stowed away the two Beyonder characteristics, taking hold of Burman’s head before vanishing from the spot.

Silently, the remaining parts of Burman’s body ignited, enveloping the grayish-black volcano in crimson flames.

More than 200 meters away, Lumian retrieved the golden straw hat that had been blown by the strong wind.

As he secured it on his head, he swiftly disappeared.

This time, he appeared on the road outside the Andatna volcano’s steam locomotive.

Lumian glanced up at the grayish-black volcano’s crater, witnessing the golden-red sunset, resembling flowing lava, receding faster than expected.

The mountaintop swiftly darkened.

…

In the cathedral of The Fool in Port Farim, not far from Quartier des Black Pearls, Lumian, adjusting his golden straw hat, approached the towering half-giant bishop donned in a half top hat and black trench coat. In a deep voice, he said,

“I want to repent.”

The half-giant bishop, with light-blue eyes and a towering stature exceeding 2.5 meters, regarded Lumian for a moment before nodding. “Follow me.”

He led Lumian into a specialized confessional—a windowless, pitch-black chamber.

“I don’t wish to repent in the dark,” Lumian calmly said, removing his golden straw hat.

The half-giant bishop ignited the candles, sealing the door shut.

Pa! Lumian tossed a head with pale-white fur and vacant eye sockets to the half-giant bishop’s feet.

“Did you commit murder?” the half-giant bishop inquired in a mellow tone, giving the head a brief once-over.

“No, I just want to help him repent.” Lumian gestured towards the bloody head, oozing yellow pus. “He’s Demon Warlock Burman.”

“Burman?” Only then did the half-giant bishop closely inspect the head, recognizing distinct features.

He fell silent for a few moments before stating, “You want the Church to assist you in claiming the bounty from the Intis government?”

“As I mentioned, I’m here to repent for him. His bounty is part of his penance.” Lumian’s voice remained unchanged.

The half-giant bishop struggled to comprehend.

Lumian retrieved most of the items acquired from Burman from his Traveler’s Bag, leaving behind the dark soft-cover notebook and the fake treasure map.

Clatter. These items, some endowed with superpowers, some valuable, spilled onto the ground.

The half-giant bishop, sporting a top hat and trench coat, fell silent for a few seconds.

“The Demon Warlock bounty stands at 600,000 verl d’or. These items hold considerable value too. Together, they could fetch nearly 1 million verl d’or. It’s a substantial sum for anyone. Enough to ensure you don’t have to take further risks. Are you certain about donating it to us and establishing a charity fund?”

Lumian didn't directly answer the half-giant bishop's question. Instead, he reiterated, "This is Burman's penance."

"Alright, since you trust our Church, we'll comply with your wishes," the half-giant bishop, named Theis, said. "Remember my name and feel free to monitor the charity fund's progress closely."

Lumian gazed at The Fool's Sacred Emblem in the confessional, pressed his hand to his chest, and gave a slight bow.

"Praise The Fool!"

He then closed his eyes and prayed, Great Lord, I implore you to punish the world for their sins and watch over our compensation. This isn't atonement; it's self-punishment…

Lumian repented earnestly for a while before straightening up. He opened his eyes and turned to leave.

"What shall be the name of the charity fund?" the half-giant bishop hurriedly inquired.

Lumian took a deep breath and replied, "Helen, the Helen Charity Fund."

"Do we need to inform the authorities about who killed Burman?" the half-giant bishop cautiously asked.

"No need, but there's no requirement to deliberately obscure the clues for me." Lumian didn't look back. He put on his golden straw hat and exited The Fool's cathedral.

…

That night, Lumian once again entered the bar beside Sun Square known as Pelican.

Batna Comté, as usual, sat at the bar counter, sipping on Golden Somme sugar wine. Beside him was a girl dressed as an adventurer with adorable facial features.

Lumian walked over and joined Batna and the other patrons. He smiled and snapped his fingers at the bartender.

"A glass of Golden Somme."

Batna glanced at him and remarked, "Someone's in a good mood."

"Indeed." Lumian received the golden syrup from the bartender and tapped the table with the bottom of the glass. Then, he stood up and raised the glass. "Everyone, I've encountered two things worth celebrating today."

He spoke with enthusiasm and joy, “The first is that I completed a commission worth more than 100,000 verl d’or!”

“Impossible…” Batna and the female adventurer beside him exclaimed in unison.

This bounty was even higher than Black Baronet’s bounty. How could it be accomplished in a day?

Moreover, Batna knew that Louis Berry’s employer, Fidel, was already deceased. How could he have received a new commission?

Lumian continued in a passionate tone, “To celebrate this, I’ll treat everyone at the bar counter to a glass of Golden Somme!”

Nearly ten adventurers and patrons expressed admiration. One of them teased, “Regardless of the truth, I believe you!”

The others chimed in.

Lumian’s smile widened.

“Second thing to be happy about—I’ve woven a tale to deceive a group of fools!”

Suddenly, the expressions of everyone at the bar counter froze.

Lumian glanced at them and continued,”But it’s true that drinks are on the house!”

The adventurers and patrons booed, expressing that if they could drink for free, they didn’t mind being fools.

Thus, Lumian spent 96 licks, or 4.8 verl d’or, treating the twelve people at the bar counter to a glass of Golden Somme.

Observing Louis Berry, Batna silently muttered, He’s genuinely happy…

…

Late at night, aboard the Flying Bird, Room 5, first-class cabin.

Lumian returned to the barely habitable master bedroom, ignited the kerosene lamp, and retrieved the dark soft-cover notebook and the fake treasure map he had obtained from Demon Warlock Burman from his Traveler’s Bag.

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Chapter 531 - 531 Depths of Death

531 Depths of Death

Bathed in the yellowish glow of the kerosene lamp, Lumian perused Burman's notebook. The pages chronicled the erratic musings of a mind teetering on the edge of instability.

"Once life slips away, spirits journey to the spirit world, except in rare cases!

"If I can craft the right summoning chant, a Spirit Guide's power could pull Helen's spirit back to our reality.

"That's step one toward bringing her back."

Upon seeing this, Lumian indiscernibly shook his head.

If only resurrection were that simple…

He turned the page.

"New mystical knowledge gained:

"In ancient times, intelligent beings ventured into the Underworld after death. Those deeply devout or exceptionally impactful could ascend to the corresponding deity's Heaven. However, during the Fifth Epoch, a surplus of undead lingered beyond the Underworld.

"I'm uncertain if Helen's spirit has entered the Underworld or returned solely to the spirit realm. When summoning, I must address these separately; mixing them would guarantee failure.

"Despite the sea monsters' formidable might, they lack the power to confine a soul. No similar occurrences manifest in that sea region. For now, special circumstances needn't be considered. Additionally, Helen wasn't a fervent follower of the Eternal Blazing Sun."

…

"I encountered Helen again.

"But she's entirely lost the memory of me.

"Her form and essence are gradually fading away. In a few short years, she'll transform into just another undead.

“I have no more than five years.

“How can I reawaken her consciousness and recover her memories? Merely providing a vessel capable of housing a departed spirit doesn’t seem sufficient.”

…

“Don’t forget the moonlit waves by the city’s lighthouse. They bore witness to my proposal and Helen’s acceptance.”

…

“Don’t forget Gasparo seafood rice; it’s Helen’s favorite. After every adventure, when we returned to Port Farim, she always suggested indulging in it.”

…

“Don’t forget the sunset at Andatna volcano. That’s where we met and vowed to revisit often in the future. Even as we age, we can’t let that romance fade away…”

…

“Don’t forget… Don’t forget… Don’t forget…”

…

“My head hurts.”

…

“I razed a town, leading to the deaths of two to three hundred people.

“The sight of those couples, parents, and children perishing didn’t bring me joy.

“Instead, my heart plunged into darkness.

“I acknowledge this as my sin, an irreversible mistake. I’m aware that I’m no longer the Burman you once liked.

“Yet, I harbor no regrets.”

…

“Swindlers, curse them!

“Ending these swindlers has rekindled a long-lost sense of satisfaction.”

…

“Helen, if you were still alive, we might have had our own child, right?

“Why do those evil Warlocks always employ infants, children, and their remains as essential ingredients for the creation of their dark arts?

“I’ve become even more evil than them…”

…

“Helen, I’ve lost my way. All my endeavors have ended in failure.”

…

“Helen, I aspire to acquire the Sequence 5 potion formula and ingredients for the Death pathway.”

…

“Helen, Fidel intervened. He warned that it would turn me into a monster and erase my original memories.

“Helen, I refuse to forget you.

“Helen, please forgive my cowardice.”

…

“Helen, I actually encountered that islander from Resurrection Island!

“It truly exists!

“Harrison defeated me, but he spared my life. He questioned why I had forcibly transitioned to the Death pathway.

“He revealed that my previous attempts were misguided. True resurrection isn’t that straightforward.

“He explained that within the depths of death lies everyone’s mark. Only by bringing forth the corresponding mark into reality and utilizing it as a foundation to reconstruct spirit and flesh can we achieve genuine resurrection, retaining our original knowledge and complete memories.

“Helen, I’m overjoyed. I glimpse hope in reviving you once more.”

…

“Harrison imparted knowledge about the Death domain to me. It’s through understanding this knowledge and reclaiming their mark that he and his kin can undergo repeated deaths and resurrections, escaping the clutches of mortality.

“While they seldom depart Resurrection Island, it’s not an absolute. Travel-

loving islanders like Harrison have ventured to different lands, leaving the Resurrection Island legend imprinted in the memories of a select few humans. Those with sinister motives compiled this information into a sea map for Resurrection Island.

“The treasure map Mark sold us is counterfeit, but parts of it trace back to the genuine one. Harrison, in his quest, left Resurrection Island to eliminate the authentic map and eradicate all who know how to reach that sea and discover Resurrection Island.

“Helen, armed with Harrison’s information, I attempted to summon a spirit from the depths of death. I succeeded, conjuring an evil spirit named Arden. As it was feeble, I easily vanquished it, collecting its blood for the ensuing ritual.”

…

“Helen, forgive me. I couldn’t rein in my emotions.

“Ever since encountering Harrison and gaining the knowledge to truly bring you back, impatience has seized me. I can’t control my emotions.

“Those islanders are swindlers deserving of death. I ended the life of a swindler and numerous others. I refused to squander any more time, hastening the ritual.

“Helen, I’m sorry. I failed again. I wasn’t adequately prepared.”

…

“Helen, have I lost my sanity entirely? A mere retort from Fidel triggered a frenzy, leading me to slay everyone in the house.

“He must perish too, the one who dared to threaten me and Fidel!”

…

“Helen, I’ve failed. It’s been a while since I sustained such severe injuries.

“My body is largely undead. These wounds aren’t fatal, but I lack any allies.

“Damn it, damn it, damn it!”

…

“Helen, I’ve missed you once again.”

Lumian reached the conclusion of the dark soft-covered notebook and fixated on the sentence for an extended moment.

It was as if he had transformed into a statue.

After a few minutes, Lumian couldn't resist raising his right hand to massage his temples.

The marks from the depths of death, Resurrection Island, and Harrison inundated his mind, prompting a sudden regret for not seeking Franca's assistance.

To ensure a clean demise for Burman, he never intended to channel the Demon Warlock's spirit from the outset. This meant he had no plans to return to Trier and bring Franca to his current location.

However, his instinct now urged him to delve further into the resurrection method outlined by Harrison. He desired an understanding of the island where inhabitants experienced repeated deaths and rebirths.

Phew… Lumian closed the notebook and exhaled, making an effort to recollect his knowledge of death-related mysticism.

He recalled hearing the words "death" and "mark" conjoined.

Madam Magician had mentioned the term "death mark" while answering a question about the Tudor figure at the Samaritan Women's Spring!

Is this a concept distinct from remnant spirits and imprints, directly linked to resurrection?

From the depths of death… What lurks within the depths of death…

What I now know that is explicitly tied to death—the Underworld, the Samaritan Women's Spring, the River Styx connecting two worlds…

What a pity. I wonder what Harrison from Resurrection Island looks like…

Burman's recorded knowledge is in disarray. It seemed he wrote whatever thoughts occurred to him. Without him, organizing a complete resurrection ritual and the corresponding principles proves exceedingly challenging…

No, not just challenging. Impossible. Burman only documented what he feared he might forget. The remaining knowledge is entirely absent… Lumian rubbed his temples once more and unfolded the counterfeit treasure map. After careful scrutiny, he couldn't discern which parts were authentic and which were spurious.

He intended to send the map to Franca and Jenna at dawn, employing them to employ mysticism to differentiate between the real and the fake.

…

The next morning, Lumian wiped his mouth with a napkin and observed Ludwig grappling with the breakfast dishes.

Knock, knock, knock. A gentle rap echoed on the door.

“Please come in.” Lumian gestured for Lugano to open the door.

Do you really think I’m a servant? Alright, providing the money makes you the boss… Lugano criticized, leaving the dining table to open the door.

It was Philip outside.

Philip entered the room, smiling at Lumian.

“We’ll set sail in two and a half hours. If you have any special items you want to buy, do it as soon as possible.”

“I don’t,” Lumian replied with a smile as he stood up.

Philip glanced out the window and said, “By the way, you might not be aware, but the Demon Warlock has been apprehended.”

“Is that so?” Lugano looked surprised.

Over the past few days, the most popular topic among the passengers on the ship was Demon Warlock Burman, who had caused them to stay in Port Farim.

Seeing Lumian raise his eyebrows in inquiry, Philip said with a relaxed expression,

“Not only was Burman apprehended, but he was also in the state of a corpse.”

“Who’s behind this?” Lumian asked, his curiosity piqued.

Philip shook his head.

“I don’t have all the details yet. What I do know is that it’s closely tied to The Fool’s Church. The adventurer Gehrman Sparrow is said to be their messenger.”

“Could it be that the adventurer took matters into his own hands?” Lugano asked eagerly.

At sea, he naturally heard about faith in The Fool and had no doubts about it

—sailors, passengers, and dock porters would tell him about it.

“Hard to say. But anyone capable of taking down a Demon Warlock has to be at least as formidable as a pirate admiral.” Philip sighed deeply.

Suddenly, a commotion echoed from the gangway. Passengers destined to board at Port Farim were finally given the green light to board the Flying Bird.

Lumian approached the window and spotted a familiar face.

Batna Comté!

He and the adorable-looking female adventurer climbed aboard the deck together.

Lumian pushed open the window and called out, “Batna, are you guys headed to Port Santa as well?”

Batna looked up, surprised, his eyes fixed on the rooms on the top floor.

Spotting Louis Berry, he grinned and replied, “Absolutely. I’m off to witness Port Santa’s sea prayer ritual!”

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Chapter 532 - 532 “Real” Map

532 “Real” Map

Among the nations of the Northern Continent, only the Lord of Storms in Loen wielded authority over the sea. Yet, sailors, sea merchants, and adventurers loyal to other deities sought to evade shipwrecks, brutal weather, and the need for specific protection. This led to various compromises and unique circumstances.

Certain Churches established subsidiary gods, Angels, and Saints endowed with storm and sea-related powers for followers with corresponding concerns. Take, for instance, the Sea God of the Church of The Fool.

In some Churches, believers were tacitly permitted to hold a partial belief in the Lord of Storms.

Other Churches turned a blind eye to the folklore beliefs flourishing in ports and islands, allowing the performance of specific rituals without requiring the presence of clergymen.

The sea prayer ritual of Port Santa in the Feynapotter Kingdom fell into the latter category. Its folklore was believed to trace back to the Fourth Epoch. This annual event, overseen by the Church of Earth Mother, was modest and confined to this port; it lacked any widespread publicity.

In essence, nearly nobody—neither the locals of Port Santa nor the merchants, adventurers, or pirates frequenting the shores of the Fog Sea—

was aware of such a sea prayer ritual.

After gathering the pertinent details, Lumian made an initial assessment that either Bard or Ultraman, the culprits behind the sea prayer ritual pranks, were likely locals of Port Santa or actively engaged in maritime affairs.

Considering that Bard’s work, “Emperor Roselle’s Secret Chronicles,” had been specifically handed over to Trier’s underground booksellers for publication, Lumian leaned towards the belief that Ultraman had been the instigator of the problems at Port Santa’s sea prayer ritual.

Despite the fact that “Emperor Roselle’s Secret Chronicles” seemed more suited for sale in Intis, Lumian reasoned that if Bard had a permanent residence in the Feynapotter Kingdom, it would be wiser to publish it under the Feynapotter Kingdom’s name before discreetly selling it to Intis. This precaution was to avoid drawing the attention of Intis’s secret police.

Many Beyonders had underestimated the vigilance of ordinary police officers and investigators, resulting in unwanted attention and arrests by official Beyonders who got wind of the news.

Upon learning that Batna and his female companion desired to witness Port Santa's sea prayer ritual, Lumian waved with a grin.

"Me too!"

He stepped back from the window, biding his time until nearly noon to compose a letter detailing his recent encounters and the handling of Burman's "legacy."

After folding the letter and wrapping it within the folds of the fake treasure map, Lumian summoned Rabbit Chasel once again.

The rabbit-like spirit creature still sported its gold-rimmed glasses and a small, blurry half top hat.

Silently observing for a few moments, Lumian then handed over the items destined for Franca and Jenna.

"Thank you," he said politely.

That's basic courtesy!

"No need to thank me," replied Rabbit Chasel, removing his half top hat and executing a slight bow.

Lumian's lips twitched as he witnessed the mutated Rabbit of Knowledge disappear from the room.

He was worried that this rabbit might unpredictably draw its gun and finish off the sender at any given moment.

The next time around, he resolved to caution Jenna against imparting such dangerous knowledge to Rabbit Chasel!

…

Trier, within the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca glanced at Rabbit Chasel, adorned with its half top hat and gold-

rimmed glasses. Leaning closer to Jenna, she whispered, "Isn't it too dangerous to let it read the Adventurer series?"

Jenna smiled and replied, "Don't you find Rabbit Chasel adorable? Furthermore, a messenger can encounter danger. Reading more about Gehrman Sparrow might make it stronger."

Franca had only briefly raised the issue but shifted her focus to unfolding the fake treasure map and letter, reading it with earnest attention.

“Wow, Lumian’s efficiency is impressive. He aimed to punish Burman for his sins and managed to complete the hunt in less than twelve hours!

“The Beyonder characteristics didn’t form Sealed Artifacts with mixed abilities; instead, they emerged and merged separately. Could it be because Burman no longer harbored madness and paranoia before his death, and his emotions had calmed down?”

“Heh heh, there’s no need to inform 007 so quickly if we encounter similar cases in the future. Lumian might resolve it himself within a day. Everything will return to normal, and world peace will prevail. That way, 007 won’t blame me for always causing trouble for him.”

Franca had previously informed Jenna that the code name of her collaborator among the authorities was 007.

So fast? Demon Warlock isn’t weak… Jenna couldn’t believe it.

That was a criminal with a bounty of 600,000 verl d’or. All the verl d’or she had seen so far added up to less!

Lumian’s bounty amounted to less than 100,000.

Franca pursed her lips and remarked, “Think about his experiences in Trier and the items and abilities he possesses. He’s simply a supermodel, alright? If he were to be released, it would be equivalent to a dimensional reduction strike on Beyonders without any special traits. He wouldn’t be much inferior to most Sequence 5 Beyonders!”

Jenna recalled the dangerous situations she had faced alongside Lumian and nodded in agreement.

“What do you mean by dimensional reduction strike?”

Franca, slightly surprised by Jenna’s question, took a moment before explaining, “It’s akin to an adult bullying a child or a demigod bullying a Low-Sequence Beyonder.

“Furthermore, think about it. A half-mad Beyonder like the Demon Warlock is mentally, psychologically, emotionally, and physically problematic. He was completely countered by Lumian’s Symphony of Hatred. When facing him, all you need to do is be wary of the strange combination of abilities and avoid provoking him into a monster. Lumian has the experience, so he won’t be careless.”

Jenna muttered, “Now that you mention it, why do I feel that killing the Demon Warlock isn’t too difficult?”

“You can’t put it that way. It can only be said that the forced switching of pathways will indeed make one very powerful and dangerous, but it also has huge flaws and many problems. It’s easy to target,” Franca corrected her before continuing reading Lumian’s letter.

After she was done reading, Franca sighed with excitement and said, “The sea sounds so fun, and the scenery is beautiful. If it weren’t for the mission, I’d want to be an adventurer at sea and hunt pirates!”

Jenna, leaning against the sofa and reading the letter from behind, felt a longing in her heart.

Who wouldn’t love to travel? It was just that they hadn’t had the luxury before.

Franca regained her composure and clicked her tongue.

“Lumian is truly generous. He actually donated all the bounty and spoils of war to establish a charity fund. Sigh, actually, I understand his thoughts…”

Until now, she had been covertly providing for the family of her body’s original owner until now.

As Franca and Jenna conversed, they both performed Magic Mirror Divination.

Their answers were unanimous: The map was real!

“Whether it’s Burman or the immortal islander, Harrison, they both admit that a portion of this map is fake. It can’t help adventurers reach Resurrection Island, and they might even encounter great danger along the way… What’s fake about it?” Franca pondered, casting her gaze at the treasure map.

On the map, the location marked as Resurrection Island lay deep within the Fog Sea. The westernmost colonial island of the Intis Republic, Aroca, was still quite a distance away.

…

Can’t distinguish the fake parts? Lumian shook his head after receiving the reply and continued reading the information about spirit world creatures in his hand.

His primary focus was to find any introduction to the Arden evil spirit that Burman had summoned from the depths of death.

Lumian flipped through the information until evening, satiating his hunger in his room. Grabbing the golden straw hat he had recently taken a liking to, he descended to the deck and entered the bar.

By that time, the Flying Bird had already departed Port Farim. As expected, Batna and his female companion sat at the bar counter, engaged in animated conversations with the surrounding passengers about Demon Warlock Burman’s

demise.

“We don’t know which adventurer did it either. If it hadn’t been officially announced, we wouldn’t have known that Burman had been killed. No one in Port Farim’s adventurer circle knew about it in advance!” Batna held the Lanti Proof and said excitedly, “To think that such a powerful adventurer remains hidden in Port Farim! Indeed, we can’t be arrogant or conceited. Perhaps the tramp sitting by the roadside is a powerful figure!”

Spotting Lumian pushing his way through, Batna whistled.

“You’re staying in first-class? Are you that rich?”

“I’m not considered rich,” Lumian replied with a smile as he settled onto a barstool. “I just feel that accidents can happen at any moment at sea, and I can be killed by pirates at any moment. So, why not try to pamper yourself? What’s the point of saving up money when you’re dead? Since you’re an adventurer, you have to lead a carefree life because who knows if there’ll be a tomorrow.”

“Since you’re an adventurer, you have to lead a carefree life because who knows if there’ll be a tomorrow…” The female adventurer beside Batna whispered Lumian’s last sentence, seemingly touched.

Batna took a sip of the Lanti Proof and chuckled.

“However, the prerequisite is that you have some savings. Otherwise, if you end up having fun today, you’ll go hungry tomorrow.

“Man, 600,000 verl d’or. I wonder which adventurer obtained Burman’s 600,000 verl d’or. And the items on him…”

Batna revealed a yearning and envious expression.

Lumian picked up the absinthe he had just requested and took a sip, savoring the faint bitterness lingering in the fragrance.

…

In the following days, the Flying Bird calmly navigated towards the Feynapotter Kingdom. Philip, the security supervisor, found it surreal.

Is the bad luck over? Did the major problem disembark? Did Demon Warlock Burman’s death stem from the major problem entering Port Farim?

Just as Port Santa was only a day away, Philip observed his subordinate deliver a telegram.

“Boss, it’s from your comrades in Port Farim.” The subordinate handed the folded telegram to Philip.

What happened in Port Farim that requires me to be informed? Did the major problem cause trouble in Port Farim and trace it to the Flying Bird? He unfolded the telegram and scanned its contents.

“The adventurer who hunted Demon Warlock Burman is suspected to be on your ship. His name is Louis Berry.”

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Chapter 533 - 533 Forgotten

533 Forgotten

“His name is Louis Berry.”

Philip’s gaze froze at the last sentence.

Him?

He killed Demon Warlock?

Suddenly, Philip recalled the tragic scene of Room 5 in the first-class cabin as though it had been shelled.

Could it be that the clash between Louis Berry and Demon Warlock Burman had caused this devastation?

Rumors circulated that the Church of The Fool exchanged Burman’s head for a bounty the following day, but procedures like that didn’t happen instantaneously. A delay of half a day was ordinary!

Did Louis Berry truly kill Demon Warlock?

Is he truly that formidable? I couldn’t discern it at all…

I understand he’s a magnet for trouble, and various details attest to his strength and unpredictable nature, but the notion of him vanquishing Demon Warlock caught me by surprise. And he appeared unscathed.

He even contained the battle’s impact within a single room, ensuring no one overheard anything…

Could he have also been the one who frightened off Bone Splitter Basil? No, he was near me and didn’t make a move… Unless Basil knows him and comprehends his danger?

A person capable of eliminating Demon Warlock is indeed capable of deterring Bone Splitter… Even though Basil might not be weaker than Burman despite the relatively low bounty. Louis Berry, however, possesses the ability to silence Burman without a trace…

What caused the encounter with the Death Navigators?”

Philip muttered silently.

Though he couldn't fully embrace the idea that the young man who always boasted in the bar with a smile was a powerful enough adventurer to vanquish Demon Warlock, Philip hesitated to harbor too many doubts.

"Boss, should we… should we expose Louis Berry's identity as a fake?" the crew member who had delivered the telegram asked in a hushed tone.

Philip instinctively raised the paper bearing the telegram and delivered a light smack to his subordinate's head.

"Do you have a death wish? I've emphasized repeatedly, when faced with anomalies on the ship, turn a blind eye unless it's an immediate crisis, and wait until we reach our destination."

Philip pondered for a moment, concerned that his subordinate might act in error due to misunderstanding or disbelief. He clarified deliberately, "We're still at sea. Even if we report the false identities now, confirming Louis Berry's true identity and existence won't save or aid us unless someone departs from Port Santa. Yet, such inter-country cooperation requires days of prior communication. By the time assistance arrives, Louis Berry will likely have disembarked.

"Moreover, verifying his real identity takes time. To blow the whistle successfully, we'd be risking Louis Berry noticing and retaliating. Is it worth it?

"I prefer to preserve the peace of these past few days."

The crew member pondered for a moment and ultimately concurred with the boss's decision.

Philip breathed a sigh of relief, tearing up the telegram and casually tossing it into the trash can.

"Inform the recipients and translators of the telegram to keep this information under wraps!" Philip instructed before leaving the room and descending the stairs to the deck.

Just as he was contemplating the romantic plans for the evening with his newfound lover, his thoughts came to a sudden halt when he spotted Louis Berry, the central figure of the telegram. There he stood by the shipboard, his gaze fixed on the gently undulating blue sea, idly twirling a golden straw hat in one hand while holding a glass of light golden champagne in the other.

As if sensing Philip's gaze, Lumian turned around, locking eyes with him.

A subtle smile played on Louis Berry's lips as he raised the champagne glass in his right hand, as though toasting him, before taking a leisurely sip.

Philip's body tensed, determined to conceal any change in expression.

Is Louis Berry merely extending a greeting, or does he possess knowledge about the telegram and my decision?

…

Waa! Waa! Waa!

White-headed seabirds soared gracefully under the pristine, blue sky, their cries distinct from those in Port Gati and Port Farim.

At times, they glided low, skimming past wooden fishing boats adorned with billowing white sails.

Fishing, a vital industry in Port Santa, instilled both fear and reverence for the sea in every fisherman's veins.

While they could have children who strayed from the beliefs of the Earth Mother, they couldn't bear descendants who dared to blaspheme the sacred sea prayer ritual.

Lumian, taking in the scenery different from the Intis port and Port Santa's gradually rising mountain range in the distance, silently offered praise to The Fool.

The journey from Port Farim to Port Santa unfolded surprisingly uneventfully

—no storms, no pirates, and no encounters with Beyonder incidents.

This respite allowed him a few days of tranquility. Lumian finished two foundational Highlander textbooks and perused information on spirit world creatures.

He failed to find a description of Arden, the evil spirit from the depths of death. Whether Madam Magician omitted the information or remained unaware of it remained uncertain.

"We'll be entering the port in half an hour." Lumian, who had been taking respite for the past few days, cracked his neck from the living room window of Cabin 5 in first class.

Here lay potential clues about the key members of April Fool's, Bard, and Ultraman!

Of course, it could also be a trap.

Lumian's body trembled slightly, filled with anticipation.

Finally, the Flying Bird smoothly docked at Port Santa.

Lumian, hand in hand with Ludwig and trailed by Lugano carrying their luggage, made their way towards the gangway. On the deck, they encountered Batna Comté

and his companion Nolfi, already awaiting their turn.

Perhaps influenced by Lumian's words about seizing the moment as an adventurer, Nolfi, who had initially insisted on separate cabins, had moved in with Batna two days ago.

Batna's face radiated a flush of confidence as he waved and exclaimed, "Louis, you don't strike me as much of an adventurer. What adventurer brings their child out to sea?"

"Isn't it a common task for adventurers to protect their employers' children?" Lumian retorted with a smile.

In a sense, the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom was indeed his employer.

Batna, eyeing Ludwig, dressed in a young gentleman's attire and carrying a distinctive red school bag, found Lumian's explanation reasonable.

Yet, he couldn't help but wonder, how could the child's parents be so nonchalant about entrusting their son to an unfamiliar adventurer?

"At the same time, he's my godson," Lumian added.

Understanding dawned on Batna as he gestured towards the harbor below.

"Where do you plan to stay? Shall we attend the sea prayer ritual together?"

"I'm not sure yet. If the gods will it, our paths may cross again." Lumian's demeanor shifted upon arriving at Port Santa, his nerves tightening. Casual disclosure of his whereabouts was no longer in his plans.

Batna, accustomed to Lumian's occasional seer-like words, detected nothing unusual. He sighed and said, "I hope our paths cross once more."

With a casual wave, Batna led Nolfi toward the ramp.

Lumian smiled and offered a parting reminder, "Do you know Highlander?"

"A bit," Batna replied, gesturing toward Nolfi, whose adorable features, black hair, and brown eyes spoke of her mixed Feynapotter and Intis heritage. "Her mother is a native of Port Santa. She carries blood from both Feynapotter and Intis."

Port Santa local… That explains your desire to experience the sea prayer ritual after learning about it. Lumian held his silence, watching as Batna and Nolfi descended the gangway with their suitcases.

"Not only is Louis generous and warm, but he also has a knack for humor. He appears quite professional," Batna commented before leaving the port district. Glancing back at the Flying Bird, he said to Nolfi, "He didn't disclose their lodging just now. Clearly, he's unwilling to unveil his employer's circumstances.

He likely came to Port Santa to escort that child home."

Nolfi nodded gently.

"You shouldn't have asked. An adventurer's companions are only in the present. We might not cross paths again in the future."

"Haha, you've been influenced by Louis's life philosophy." Batna noticed a paperboy approaching and suggested to Nolfi, "Grab a few newspapers related to maritime rumors. We've been at sea for days, and we're out of the loop."

Nolfi shared the same idea, using degan copper coins she had exchanged prior for two newspapers.

Standing on the street, she unfolded the coastal port favorite, Five Seas News, and began reading its contents.

Batna, unfamiliar with Highlander, patiently waited for Nolfi to digest the news and relay the information to him.

Suddenly, Nolfi's eyes narrowed, and her grip on the newspaper tightened.

"What's wrong?" Batna asked curiously.

Nolfi hesitated before sharing, "There's a rumor in Port Farim that the adventurer who hunted the Demon Warlock is named…"

"What's his name?" Batna pressed.

Nolfi fell silent for a few seconds before saying, "His—his name is Louis Berry."

Louis, Louis Berry? Batna was taken aback.

…

Lumian, Ludwig, and Lugano patiently waited for most passengers to disembark before making their exit.

As Lumian stepped off the gangway, his attention was drawn to a woman in a black nun's attire and matching hat. Carrying a brown suitcase, she turned into a fork in the road.

C-could it be the weeping woman I glimpsed through the Mystery Prying Glasses? Lumian pondered, averting his gaze thoughtfully.

As he moved forward, his mind raced with plans for the immediate future.

Firstly, he needed to find an inn in the harbor district. Secondly, he had to compose a letter to Madam Magician, notifying her of his arrival in Port Santa. The situation involved Celestial Worthy and potentially played into Loki's schemes. Carelessness was not an option.

Write a letter to Madam Magician…

Write a letter!

Lumian's pupils dilated as he sought to discern if the world ahead was real.

Throughout his days aboard the ship, he kept forgetting to write to Madam Magician!

He had intended to consult his Major Arcana card holder, questioning the significance of the frequent occurrences related to the Flying Bird's calamities.

Yet, he had completely forgotten about it!

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Chapter 534 - 534 Over the Mountain

534 Over the Mountain

It was today, amidst Lumian's contemplation of his next moves, that he seemed to snap out of a dream-like trance. The recollection of his intention to write a letter to Madam Magician, now forgotten, hit him like a bullet.

The realization was more unsettling than a battlefield injury, sending shivers down his spine, and causing his hair to stand on end.

Had this situation escalated, he might have perished without even realizing it!

It feels like déjà vu… That's right! In Dardel, Lugano and I had unintentionally overlooked the option of escaping. We were searching for a pretext to enter the town and investigate Derangement. As Lumian's thoughts raced, a sudden revelation struck him.

The woman he had seen weeping on the Flying Bird was the source of Derangement—a humanoid Sealed Artifact that had escaped its restraints!

After leaving Dardel, she had reached Port Gati and boarded the Flying Bird.

Could she be instinctively influencing the minds of those around her, erasing thoughts that might pose a threat? But that would require her to monitor everyone's psychological activities at just the right time.

Or, as Anthony had speculated, did she naturally implant mental cues, causing observers to overlook her existence? Even if glimpsed, the memory of her would fade later. Simultaneously, any communication with High-

Sequence Beyonder powers would be 'actively' forgotten or abandoned. This classification wasn't determined by her but by the individual's self-

awareness. If they believed the person to be a High-Sequence Beyonder, then so they were…

Once she disembarked and ceased planting those natural and persistent cues, the overlooked issues could be recalled through other connections.

Fortunately, the Sealed Artifact remained dormant on the Flying Bird. Otherwise, I might have lost control and transformed into a monster…

Apart from me and Ludwig, she also played a part in scaring off Bone Splitter Basil? Heh heh, it's quite funny from the perspective of the notorious pirate.

Choosing an ordinary merchant ship for plunder, Basil found himself faced with three escalating waves of malice upon surfacing—a hornet's nest stirred into action. In that scenario, he had no other choice but to escape.

Were the strange Death Navigator fish also drawn by her presence?

Initially, Lumian felt lingering fear, but soon a sense of joy washed over him.

This revelation confirmed that his contribution to the calamities on the Flying Bird was minimal, just as Aurore had suggested. Throughout the journey, only the Demon Warlock incident could be attributed to him.

Lumian could accept such frequency.

With determination, Lumian retrieved a post-it note and fountain pen, hastily scribbling a memo:

"Find a nearby motel and write to Madam Magician. Focus on the death mark and the humanoid Sealed Artifact."

After folding the note and stowing it in his pocket, Lumian utilized Lugano's interactions with the dock's inhabitants to discreetly inquire about nearby motels. Lowering his voice, he addressed his left chest.

"Temiboros, you actually failed to notice such a dangerous Sealed Artifact nearby."

Termiboros's majestic voice resonated. "Why should I warn you?"

Lumian criticized, Oh, you've learned the art of sophistry… He turned to Ludwig, who was nibbling on a long piece of bread.

I wonder if this kid's lack of awareness stems from the Church of Knowledge's seal or a belief that there was no danger since the woman hadn't gone mad. I don't have to dwell on it for now… Averting his gaze, he waited for Lugano to gather directions before leading Ludwig toward the exit of the port district.

Port Santa stood divided, its territories sliced into thirds. One-third bustled with the comings and goings of fishermen, surrounded by a vast open space. Nearby, three ice mills hummed with activity. The remaining two-thirds, a realm reserved for merchant ships, witnessed a constant influx of passengers. Mechanical cranes labored tirelessly, lifting smelted steel, forged swords, and woven wool into the undercabin.

Amidst the pungent scent of fish, Lumian maintained an outward calm. Sometimes, his gaze wandered to the distant mountain range; other times, he scrutinized the billowing black smoke drifting from the southeast, carried downwind by the breeze.

Tasking Lugano and Ludwig with selecting two candidates each, Lumian delegated the decision-making. Ultimately, they settled at an unassuming motel

named Solow.

In Highlander, “Solow” translated to “sun.”

Although the Feynapotter Kingdom didn’t subscribe to the Eternal Blazing Sun faith, instead venerating Earth Mother, the prevalence of sunlight in their environment resulted in the frequent use of words like “Solow” and “Soros” (sunlight) in various place names.

Lumian removed his golden straw hat, shielding him from the October sun, and secured a suite from the motel’s owner—a gray-haired, tall figure with prominent cheekbones and a thick beard. The cost: 1.5 gold risot per day, or 3 verl d’or.

Official currencies in Feynapotter included risot, setta, and degan. Legend had it that before the kingdom’s split from the south-central regions, the Church of Earth Mother and the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom jointly governed the land. Unlike the Loen Kingdom’s unconventional gold pound system, Feynapotter’s currency was designed by scholars from the Church of Knowledge. One risot equaled 10 settas, and one setta equaled 10 degans, denominated as five degans, whole degan, half degan, and a quarter degan. Currently, one risot was roughly 2 verl d’or, making 12 risot equivalent to approximately 1 gold pound.

Having exchanged for 1,000 risot, Lumian held a variety of settas and degans in his possession.

After settling the bill and ascending to his quarters, Lumian’s attention was drawn to a young girl with long brown hair and freckles entering the establishment. She greeted the proprietor using the Highlander term for “grandfather.”

The owner, his cheekbones tinged by the sun, warmly embraced the girl, their right cheeks meeting as he responded with a smile and a single word

unfamiliar to Lumian. Puzzled, he turned to Lugano, seeking an explanation with his eyes.

“Ol’ Delva said, ‘It’s so good to see you, my little cabbage.’”

“Little cabbage…” Lumian echoed, taken aback by the term.

Lugano, with his pronounced eyebrows, large eyes, and sharp features, inquired with confusion, “Don’t you know that there are many descendants of Dariège here?”

Positioned on the second-floor staircase, he gestured towards the wall outside.

“The distant mountain range is the Pyraez mountain range. You Dariège folks prefer calling it the Dariège mountain range.”

At that moment, Lumian grasped the entirety of the situation.

“Is this south of the Dariège mountain range?”

“Southwest. The Dariège mountain range is a few hours away by train. In between, you’ll find vast plains, pastures, and numerous towns and villages,” Lugano clarified as he ascended the stairs. “As you might know, every autumn, shepherds from Dariège and nearby areas migrate to the southern plains for grazing. Some settle down, while others seek opportunities in the larger surrounding cities, including Port Santa.

“If you head northeast, Highlander might not be necessary. Many people there are familiar with Intisian. I have a cousin who was a widow initially. Later, she met a local while shepherding and married him. She gave up grazing and helped the herdsmen develop businesses related to sheep, cheese, wool, and more. Eventually, they saved enough to start a vineyard. Her husband values her opinions. This might be an example of Feynapotter men. Unfortunately, I’m not a woman; otherwise, I might have converted to Earth Mother!”

Listening to Lugano’s insights, Lumian recalled a piece of information Aurore had once shared.

The Dariège mountain range acted as a barrier against the cold winds heading south.

Consequently, the Gaia Province, situated south of the Dariège mountain range, enjoyed abundant sunlight and warm weather. Even in winter, the plains and pastures thrived with lush grass suitable for grazing. Lumian sensed that this knowledge had become “dynamic,” forming a network that allowed him to comprehend the geographical and weather characteristics of Port Santa and its northeastern region.

Abruptly, another thought crossed his mind.

Could it be that most of the Beyonders captured by shepherds like Pierre, who believed in Inevitability, hailed from this area?

Given the presence of a thriving port and a mountain range rich in mineral deposits, it makes sense that there would be more Beyonders here…

If that were the case, perhaps my Hunter, Provoker, and even Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristics might have originated from this region.

I’m here now…

Why do I smell the scent of inevitability…

Lumian responded casually to Lugano’s information, “How many children did your cousin have?”

“Three,” Lugano replied.

“If she hadn’t produced children, would her husband have been so obedient?” Lumian, aware of the beliefs of Earth Mother’s faith, heard about these matters

with the shepherds who frequented the pastures.

They held fertility and reproduction in high regard.

“Definitely not,” Lugano affirmed without hesitation.

As the conversation unfolded, the trio ascended to the fifth floor, entering a suite at the corridor’s end.

Lumian strolled to the balcony, casting his gaze towards the rugged mountain range in the distance.

There lay a highlander pasture and Cordu.

After nearly fifteen minutes of silent contemplation, Lumian returned to his room and began composing letters to Madam Magician and Franca.

His intention was to inform Franca of the humanoid Sealed Artifact, urging her to alert the official Beyonders of the Feynapotter Kingdom through 007. A potentially hazardous pathogen capable of madness at any moment was not fit for roaming freely outside.

…

“Wow! See? What did I say? Lumian will definitely encounter the source of Derangement again!” exclaimed Franca as she was about to depart with Jenna when she received the letter.

They were heading to Trier’s catacombs.

In the preceding days, Jenna harbored a desire to revisit Krismona Night Pillar, hoping to uncover something valuable. However, she hesitated to approach recklessly, fearing it might attract the suspicion of the Demoness Sect. Residing with Franca offered no guarantee of safety from their watchful eyes.

Thanks to Anthony’s introduction, she finally secured a mission at a mysticism gathering, providing a valid pretext.

Her task involved venturing to a specific family’s tomb on the catacombs’ third level, retrieving an antique tearcatcher for her employer.

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Chapter 535 - 535 Reply

535 Reply

Jenna completed reading Lumian's letter and lapsed into silence for a few moments before remarking,

"The origin of the Derangement is genuinely formidable… Lumian unknowingly endured its effects for nearly half a month."

Luckily, the woman's ailment didn't erupt. Otherwise, everyone on the ship would have descended into madness.

Jenna contemplated for a moment, convinced that if she were in Lumian's position, the outcome would be the same; nothing would alter.

"Hence, Sealed Artifacts above Level 2 wield immense power, but they're not practical for most situations. Their mere existence can bring catastrophe to the surrounding humans," Franca seized the chance to enlighten her companion, who had only been a Beyonder for half a year.

She conveyed this information to Madam Judgment, not 007. This decision arose from the unpredictability of the emergency communication methods. What if 007 happened to be occupied and didn't go to that location? Regular communication had to wait until after 10 p.m.

Considering the imminent threat of Derangement, Franca didn't want to waste valuable time. With Madam Judgment's real-world identity, contacting the official Beyonders of the Feynapotter Kingdom was assured—no worries about not locating her. Come nightfall, she would notify 007, ensuring the message reached the right people.

With this matter settled, Franca and Jenna reached the catacombs in a rented carriage.

Having followed Lumian to the third level, they had drawn valuable information from him. The place was now familiar to them. Soon, they entered a small square illuminated by burning white candles and adorned with two sacrificial pillars.

Jenna reflected for a moment and, to Franca's confusion, approached the sacrificial pillar representing the Eternal Blazing Sun. She outstretched her arms and reverently declared, "Praise the Sun!"

She was seeking protection.

Franca couldn't help but twitch her lips as she observed the scene. Amused, she remarked,

"Why are you becoming more and more like Ciel—uh, Lumian?"

"Dammit! How do I resemble him?" Jenna retorted instinctively.

"In terms of faith flexibility," Franca pointed out with a smile. "Like me, I only praise Mr. Fool. I didn't say anything like 'By Steam.'"

Jenna pondered for a moment and admitted, "Because Lumian and I once truly believed in the Eternal Blazing Sun…"

Suddenly, she halted, her lips moving as she cursed herself.

Am I admitting that I do resemble Lumian?

Franca had only been teasing. After praising The Fool, she left the sacrificial square with Jenna and headed towards the entrance of the fourth level, where the Krismona Night Pillar stood.

Thanks to Lumian's information, they navigated past the skeletal "blockage" on the road. In the dim environment, they moved cautiously, guided by the faint candlelight.

As Franca walked, an idea crossed her mind.

"Do you think we have to hold the lit white candles in our hands? Can we hold them above our heads or make a lantern and place them inside? Will this also protect us?"

Accustomed to Franca's occasional peculiar thoughts, Jenna casually replied, "You can give it a try."

After considering the potential consequences of a failed experiment, Franca chuckled dryly.

"Forget it, forget it. No need to be curious about such things."

She looked at Jenna beside her and changed the subject.

"Why are you dressed like this?"

Jenna, now in a black dress and a dark bonnet, exuded a beauty that carried a touch of maturity beyond her years.

Jenna instinctively scanned the surroundings for any dim yellow candles before whispering,

"I'm playing the part of a Witch to add a mysterious touch."

Clad in a black robe with a hood, she might resemble the witches known to humans, but it could easily raise suspicion from the Demoness Sect, so Jenna found a compromise.

Franca quickly grasped the situation and nodded in approval. “You’ve put in the effort.”

Seizing the moment, Jenna inquired, “What about you? Since Gardner’s demise, have you not found an opportunity to digest Pleasure with someone?”

Franca, usually thick-skinned, felt a bit embarrassed by Jenna’s words. She coughed twice and replied, “It’s not difficult to find someone if I wanted. If it doesn’t work out, I’ll turn down Browns at an opportune moment and see if she takes offense. Heh heh, if she truly experiences pleasure, she might invite me to join her…”

Franca suddenly shut her mouth, wishing she could raise her right hand and slap herself.

Why did I disclose all this to Jenna?

What a disgrace!

Clearing her throat, Franca said, “Besides, this presents an opportunity.”

“Opportunity?” Jenna was puzzled.

Franca nodded solemnly.

“Relying solely on the matters in bed and physical pleasure can indeed slowly digest the potion. It also aligns with the negative characteristics of a Demoness. However, I keep feeling that the meaning of Pleasure shouldn’t be limited to this. Taking advantage of the absence of a target for physical pleasure, I want to calm down and slowly experience and explore other possibilities.

“For instance, captivating a man’s heart. Bringing joy merely by being around me. Providing pleasure through interaction, yet beyond his reach. Each encounter becomes a torment, a glimpse into the catastrophe and affliction a Demoness brings…

“Dammit, I despise such women the most!”

Franca’s frustration blazed as she spoke.

Jenna was taken aback, her lips pursed, her body trembling slightly as she struggled to contain her laughter.

“Something along those lines. At any rate, that’s the gist,” Franca abruptly concluded the conversation.

In the dim candlelight, Franca passed by a newly constructed tomb beside an ancient one. A sudden frown creased her forehead, questioning if she had missed an opportunity.

If I had sighed and hinted at the stagnation of my digestion due to the absence of a pleasure partner, would Jenna offer sympathy and assistance?

Argh, my stubbornness has cost me!

But perhaps she'd suggest Lumian…

Franca's thoughts raced, but she remained vigilant, especially when she noticed the jumbled bones strewn along the roadside.

Finally, she and Jenna reached the Krismona Night Pillar, a black marble structure supporting the cave's ceiling.

No etchings or signs of erosion adorned its surface.

Franca studied it for a moment and remarked, "It's reminiscent of the one in Fourth Epoch Trier, albeit smaller. More like a tip."

Turning to Jenna, she inquired, "Do you sense anything peculiar?"

Furrowing her brow, Jenna shook her head slowly.

"No."

…

Feynapotter Kingdom, Gaia Province, Port Santa, Solow Motel.

Lumian swiftly received a response from Madam Magician:

"Have you faced the dread of a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact?

"Repeating it won't imprint as deeply as experiencing it firsthand.

"This likely is the power of a High-Sequence Beyonder in the Spectator pathway, constantly shaping the thoughts and perceptions of those around. Remember: 'Beware of the Spectator'…

"The Sealed Artifact has other powers. I'm uncertain if it belongs to the evil gods outside. For now, you needn't pursue or capture it. We'll liaise with the Earth Mother Church through Mr. Moon."

Reading this, Lumian muttered to himself, I'd rather not get involved, but it's not my call. Sometimes, my nature thrusts me into things I'd rather avoid.

It was just like him and the Sealed Artifact being on the same voyage, headed for the same destination.

Simultaneously, Lumian gleaned a vital detail from Madam Magician's arrangements.

Mr. Moon of the Tarot Club had close ties with the Earth Mother Church.

After a moment's reflection, Lumian resumed reading the letter.

"We're also probing Resurrection Island's existence. Mr. Hanged Man and Madam Hermit are leading the investigation. They have theories but can't confirm yet. If they need your aid, they'll inform you and seek your consent. However, don't search for Resurrection Island now. It's very dangerous. Remember, very dangerous…

"The death mark is a lingering essence of death. Ordinary humans leave one mark; certain Sequences of certain pathways can leave many. Such marks erode and merge with death, lasting longer for those higher in status or with special abilities. As for ordinary Low-Sequence Beyonders, the corresponding death mark won't exist for anything beyond a few years.

"Setting up a ritual to summon the death mark is nearly impossible. Even a Sequence 0 true god wouldn't dare approach the essence of death, let alone with a ritual.

"I suspect something amiss with the Arden evil spirit Burman summoned. The decline in Burman's mental state may have started with that spirit, not his encounter with Harrison of Resurrection Island.

"Perhaps, the Arden evil spirit isn't dead."

The Arden evil spirit, leaving behind blood traces and easily dispatched by Burman, isn't dead? What an absurd storyline… Even Madam Magician remains clueless about the nature of this creature. Recollecting Burman's encounter, Lumian couldn't detect anything abnormal.

This behavior seemed like that of a half-mad individual, forcibly transitioning between pathways.

In her closing remarks, Madam Magician cautioned: "Exercise caution during your investigations in Port Santa. Should you encounter any difficulties, don't hesitate to seek aid from the Knight of Swords."

There's no need for that for now… Lumian replied inwardly.

This stemmed from a lack of leads or information. Even if he were to correspond with the Knight of Swords, Lumian wouldn't know what to inquire about or what kind of assistance to request.

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Chapter 536 - 536 One in the Light and One in the Dark

536 One in the Light and One in the Dark

Lumian's immediate priority upon reaching Port Santa was to delve into the events of the previous sea prayer ritual, particularly focusing on the individuals involved in the accident. This investigation would be crucial in uncovering the true identities of the key members of April Fool's.

However, this phase of his pursuit carried inherent risks of deception and potential traps.

Understanding the intricacies of last year's prank was paramount before engaging the Minor Arcana—Knight of Swords—in any assistance. Lumian didn't find it plausible to enlist aid on such matters.

The sealed knowledge surrounding the events in Port Santa made it apparent that unless the Knight of Swords happened to be present, he wouldn't yield much help.

Initially, Lumian aimed to gather information about the sea prayer ritual and the previous year's incident, but such details seemed exclusive to this location. Peripheral members of April Fool's, involved in minor roles, offered limited perspectives, offering mere snippets of the puzzle.

With a flick of his wrist, Lumian transformed Madam Magician's reply into a blazing fireball.

Exiting the master bedroom of the suite, he addressed Lugano, who waited in the living room, "Let's get ourselves a local identity."

"You've already used Louis Berry's identity to check into the motel," Lugano reminded Lumian after some thought.

Did this mean it's time to depart?

Wouldn't that be a waste of an entire week's rent?

Lugano's heart ached at the thought of the 10.5 gold risot.

Spending money wasn't an issue; just don't waste it!

As a bounty hunter who had lived a tough life for many years, he was quite sensitive to money. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been so thick-skinned as to ask

Lumian for a “job.”

“Any issues?” Lumian inquired with a smile.

In the October warmth of Port Santa, Lumian sported a straightforward ensemble —light linen shirt, brown pants, a golden straw hat cradled in his grasp.

For a moment, Lugano didn’t know if he should voice his primary concern—

the matter of money. Finally, he decided to broach the subject.

“Boss, I grabbed a few newspapers from the street. Seems there are rumors in Port Farim about you taking down the Demon Warlock.”

Upon reading this news, Lugano rubbed his eyes several times, wondering if he had read wrongly.

When had his boss eradicated the Demon Warlock?

Why don’t I know?

Only the memory of the seemingly bombarded master bedroom stirred skepticism.

“It was me,” Lumian replied with a slight nod.

“…” Lugano momentarily lost the ability to organize his words.

After a brief pause, he suppressed his curiosity and feigned understanding.

“You’ve bagged a bounty of 600,000 verl d’or and some spoils of war. No wonder you’ve been throwing money around lately…”

The rent of 20 to 30 verl d’or didn’t seem extravagant anymore.

“All donated,” Lumian disclosed matter-of-factly.

“Why?” Lugano blurted out.

Lumian glanced at him.

Lugano immediately shut his mouth and smiled sheepishly.

“We need to change our location. Louis Berry’s fame in the Fog Sea makes him an easy target.”

In that gaze, Lumian conveyed an unspoken message:

Who’s in charge here? You or me?

Did I need your approval to donate the bounty?

With a subtle smile, Lumian posed the question, “Who said we were relocating?”

Lugano, caught off guard, stammered, “Not relocating…”

Lumian’s smile held a cryptic meaning as he shared, “Why else do you think I didn’t ask the clergyman from the Church of The Fool, who helped collect the bounty, to conceal my identity?”

Louis Berry, the high-profile adventurer, served as a beacon, attracting attention and revealing the landscape of potential threats.

Lumian needed an inconspicuous local guise to operate discreetly in the shadows.

Lugano, grappling with the complexity of his employer’s motives, confessed, “I-I thought you just wanted to be as famous as Gehrman Sparrow in the Five Seas.” He sensed there was more beneath the surface.

Lumian chuckled.

“Who among our generation wouldn’t want to match Gehrman Sparrow’s fame in the Five Seas?”

The desire for recognition satisfied his vanity, providing a plausible reason for not letting Theis, the Church of The Fool’s bishop, conceal his identity completely.

A superficial motive—one genuine enough to make people believe—could effectively veil hidden intentions.

“Uh…” Lugano, feeling like he couldn’t decipher Lumian’s true colors or grasp his ultimate goal, sighed inwardly.

Sigh, I’m just a Planter, a Doctor, and a seasoned bounty hunter. My intelligence can only be considered ordinary…

Lumian cast a glance at Ludwig, munching on a potato omelet, and declared, “Let’s go.”

He nudged the coat rack into a blind spot, hanging the golden straw hat, creating the illusion of an inconspicuous figure if one looked from the opposite building.

Exiting the Solow Motel, Lumian strolled along the grayish-white stone street toward the lively bars near the harbor. Lugano followed, holding Ludwig’s hand.

The ancient street boasted mottled houses with white walls and red tiles. Near entrances like Cordu, elderly women chatted in the sun, but they didn’t lend a hand in catching lice.

Passersby tread softly, lowering their voices to maintain the tranquility of the scene.

In a casual exchange with Francesco, the bartender at the Flying Bird's basement bar, Lumian learned of a cultural phenomenon in Feynapotter, shaped by the Earth Mother's faith and the significance accorded to family traditions: "Matriarchal culture."

Within each family, the most venerable grandmother, a prolific progenitor, commanded unparalleled respect. As the unquestionable "parent," they wielded a certain degree of control over every family member. Even outside the confines of their homes, this reverence persisted, for these grandmothers represented the familial symbol, embodying the Earth Mother.

The combination of religious beliefs and societal norms secured a unique status for these elderly grandmothers.

Observing this dynamic, Lumian found himself contemplating a question.

In Riston Province, a married woman, functioning as a de facto parent, held the right to be addressed as "Madame" and have her name prefixed with "Na." Could this tradition be an influence from Feynapotter's matriarchal culture just a mountain away?

Nomadic herdsmen and traders, traversing vast distances, inevitably brought back tales of their experiences. Ancient practices from the Dariège mountain range and its surroundings, spanning over a millennium, undoubtedly left an indelible mark.

Navigating the ancient yet serene streets under the brilliant sunlight, Lumian felt a sense of displacement. It was as if he had returned to Cordu during the bustling season when adults toiled in the fields, tended to sheep in the mountains, or embarked on hunting expeditions, leaving only an old woman and young children behind.

…

Trier, third level of the catacombs.

Jenna closed her eyes and extended her senses, but the black Krismona Night Pillar remained silent, devoid of any sighs or motion.

Assessing the Mirror Substitutions, she cautiously approached the enigmatic weather-free pillar, placing her palm against it.

The black pillar that supported the cave's ceiling, though cold and metallic, retained the texture of rock.

Yet, Jenna's probing mind received nothing beyond this information.

"It still doesn't work," she communicated to Franca, shaking her head.

In her reflections, Jenna recalled the two instances and sought their commonality when she had heard Krismona's voice—during her advancement and within a

special mirror world in Fourth Epoch Trier.

Both times, danger and intense emotions had been common denominators.

Jenna whispered, “The danger during my Witch advancement was suppressed by the sacrificial square. Is the key intense emotions?” Jenna pondered aloud, delving into memories of painful events that had stirred her emotions,

including her mother’s death, separation from her brother, and other poignant experiences of suffering.

Despite the visible fluctuations in her emotions, the Krismona Night Pillar remained silent, the illusory sigh elusive.

Franca, after a moment’s contemplation, suggested, “Must there be a special event to trigger it?”

“Perhaps,” Jenna replied, biting her lip. “Why don’t we try the fourth level? Lumian mentioned the shadow suspected to have formed after the death of the Demoness pathway’s Angel. That should be Krismona.”

Franca’s heart stirred, and she affirmed, “That’s right. Moreover, the shadow is controlled by the seal and doesn’t have the ability to attack humans. Yes, the prerequisite is that we strictly adhere to the series of rules in the catacombs.”

After a brief discussion, the two of them circled around the Krismona Night Pillar, replaced candles, and proceeded to descend the ancient, mottled stone steps. Under the watchful gaze of realistic dark-gray reliefs depicting human heads on both sides of the rock walls, they descended step by step.

Breaking the suffocating silence, Franca spoke up, “This place is perfect for ghost stories. The atmosphere is amazing.”

Jenna glanced at her, teasing, “Are you afraid?”

“How is that possible?” Franca retorted stubbornly.

Jenna chuckled.

“If you weren’t afraid, you’d just tell ghost stories to scare me. Now, you’re just sighing. It means you mainly want to rely on your voice to boost your courage.”

It’s a waste of your talent not to choose the Spectator pathway… Do theater actors have to learn to read people? Franca was about to argue when they reached the last ancient stone step.

Simultaneously, a sense of oppression enveloped them.

In the next moment, a yellowish candle flame flickered in their eyes.

The candle flame didn’t belong to them. It emerged from the distant fourth level of the catacombs.

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Chapter 537 - 537 Charm

537 Charm

537 Charm

Yet, their circumstances didn't permit avoidance. They had to wield a glowing white candle, a feeble defense against the encroaching darkness of the catacombs. The candle's flame, though, made them conspicuous, a visible beacon in the shadows. True concealment required them to find solace behind the sealed doors of an ancient tomb.

The option of becoming invisible or lurking in the shadows was risky—they weren't certain if it meant snuffing out the candle flame.

After a silent exchange of glances, Franca and Jenna chose to take a circuitous route, maintaining a safe distance from the distant candlelight.

In the oppressive stillness that felt like time itself had halted, the two Demonesses cautiously progressed westward, guided by road signs and the black lines on the cave ceiling.

As they approached a point parallel to the candle flame, Franca turned her head to peer down the corridor between the ancient tombs.

Thanks to her exceptional night vision, she identified the person clutching the burning candle.

A man in a black robe—deep black and light hues intermingled in his hair, a gentle profile, pale-white skin, and dark brown eyes, distinct from the Intisians.

Feynapotterian? Strikingly similar, yet subtly different. Why do I sense familiarity? When have I encountered this person before? Did he leave an impression in the memory recesses of the original owner of my body? Franca felt an inexplicable urge to approach and strike up a conversation.

She took a deep breath and suppressed it.

In the hushed darkness of the catacombs, approaching strangers recklessly could easily spark unnecessary conflict.

Franca had dedicated considerable time to delve into the circumstances surrounding the original body's demise and the person's life experiences. She sought to ensure there were no lingering issues that she needed to be wary about acquaintances from the past.

The man in the black robe, having observed the two Demonesses and noting their lack of intent to draw near, continued on his path, eventually disappearing behind an ancient tomb.

“He doesn’t look like a college student.” Jenna averted her gaze and eliminated an option.

If the individual hadn’t ventured into the fourth level of the catacombs merely driven by curiosity and excitement, it hints at a clear motive. Is he on a commissioned search for antiques, paying respects to an ancestor buried on this level, or a Beyonder delving into the mysticism and seal composition of the catacombs? Perhaps, like Jenna and myself, he pursues the revelations from the three night pillars. Franca’s mind raced through various possibilities.

On the fourth level of the catacombs, two more night pillars awaited: Marianne’s Night Pillar and Lius’s Night Pillar.

The former, the pope of the Evernight Goddess Church in the Fourth Epoch, and the latter, the Blessed of the ancient Death. Both had met their demise during the War of the Four Emperors inside Fourth Epoch Trier.

Having shared her analysis with Jenna, Franca gestured with her right hand, the one without a candle, and reassured, “Don’t worry about his motives. It won’t affect our search for Krismona’s shadow.”

I didn’t want to bother either. You were the one considering all the possibilities… I sensed that impulse in your heart. Did you truly want to investigate that person just now? Jenna, attuned to Franca’s nuances, grasped her companion’s thoughts but chose to chuckle, keeping the revelation to herself.

At times, Franca could be quite prideful!

The entrance was sealed by a dense cluster of pale-white mushrooms tinged with black.

Before Jenna could respond, she continued, “Alright, alright, alright. I get it. Now’s not the time for exploration and adventure.”

“Dammit, I didn’t stop you. Maybe Krismona’s shadow is in the mushroom cave.” Jenna, feeling stifled since entering the fourth level of the catacombs, vented her discomfort with coarse language, as if confined in a space that oppressed her.

Franca was on the verge of responding when her attention fixated on a figure standing at the corner ahead.

Clad in a simple and unadorned white robe, the figure boasted smooth black hair, exquisite facial features, and a holy aura. Her beauty transcended the surroundings of darkness, silence, and filth, as if she had emerged from the depths of human imagination,

Krismona! The name resonated simultaneously in the minds of Franca and Jenna.

They had indeed stumbled upon a shadow suspected to be a High-Sequence Beyonder—the Demoness, Krismona!

Regaining her composure, Jenna locked eyes with the figure and attempted to speak in ancient Hermes, “Hello.”

The woman’s beauty was otherworldly, captivating everyone’s attention. A faint smile graced the corners of her mouth.

Her allure was fully unleashed.

Entranced by that smile, Jenna and Franca found themselves lost, their minds fixated on a singular thought: Approach her, approach her…

Like moths drawn to a flame, fully aware of the dangers that lay in her beauty, yet compelled to draw near.

One step, two steps, three steps… The two Demonesses, eyes filled with fascination, advanced toward the woman in the simple white robe.

As they walked on, Jenna couldn’t help but instinctively sigh and feel a sense of pity.

Why did she sigh when she has such a beautiful smile?

Had she encountered something sorrowful?

Sigh…

Jenna snapped out of her daze, realizing that the woman in the white robe might not be the same as Krismona, who had sighed and protected them. At the very least, she wasn’t entirely the same!

Her vision cleared instantly, revealing the beautiful figure’s soft black hair billowing. Each strand had become unusually thick, and the top had split open, resembling a snake opening its mouth.

The pitch-black snake’s mouth faced Jenna and Franca, seemingly poised for their approach.

Jenna’s heart skipped a beat. She swiftly grabbed Franca and whispered, “Something’s amiss!”

Franca, initially taken aback, struggled for a few seconds before breaking free from her enchantment.

Coming to a sudden halt, they watched as the holy figure in the white robe stared blankly for a moment before bifurcating into a fork and vanishing into the

darkness.

Phew… Franca exhaled, her fear lingering as she remarked, “Why isn’t there a rule in the catacombs guidelines that prohibits communication with those who don’t hold candles?”

Franca glanced at her with frustration and said, “You managed to break free from the female ghost’s charm before I did.”

Jenna recounted the thoughts that had recently crossed her mind.

“But I also heard Krismona’s sigh and words in Fourth Epoch Trier…” Franca raised her right hand and touched her face. “Am I really more easily enamored with beauty?”

At this point, a sudden puzzlement overcame her.

“Actually, I’ve always found it strange that Krismona Night Pillar stands in the catacombs.

“As for the other two night pillars, one belongs to the Church of Evernight’s former pope, Marianne, and the other is named after the ancient Death’s Blessed, Lius. The latter is the Death Consul, which is very compatible with the catacombs. The former should be on the neighboring pathway of Death. In other words, they are closely related to death, home, and the dead. Krismona is the Demoness of Catastrophe, clearly distinct from them.

“I can understand why there was a giant pillar representing Krismona in Fourth Epoch Trier. That’s because there’s a special mirror world there. It contains the Primordial Demoness’s divine power left behind during the War of the Four Emperors. However, why was Krismona Night Pillar included in the catacombs’ construction? Back then, an Angel who followed the Blood Emperor perished. Why did it have to be Her?”

Jenna shook her head slowly and redirected her gaze to the spot where the holy figure had vanished.

She attempted to walk a distance in that direction and suddenly realized that the spot where the white-robed woman had been standing was an ancient tomb.

Unlike the other tombs on the fourth floor, its tomb door was open.

…

After departing Rue Aquina, home to the Solow Motel, Lumian found an empty alley and casually tossed the Lie earring to Lugano.

“Find someone skilled in crafting false identities. Change your appearance, and don’t use your current look.” Lumian gestured towards the café diagonally opposite. “I’ll be waiting for you there.”

“Yes, Boss.” Lugano displayed no sign of worry.

Despite being unfamiliar with this city, he had numerous acquaintances residing here.

Moreover, he was fluent in Highlander.

As Lumian observed the translator-guide completing his disguise, returning Lie, and heading toward Rue des Bars, he led Ludwig into the café, where each table was adorned with a bouquet of flowers.

The sun bore down, rendering the passersby somewhat languid.

Unfazed, Lumian, armed with his limited knowledge of Highlander words and gestures, successfully ordered two cups of Torres coffee with milk, a Santa yolk pastry with cream fashioned into a tower, roasted suckling pig, and duck stewed in pear juice.

Ludwig was pleased.

Sipping his coffee, Lumian surveyed the café. He noticed that the six or seven tables were occupied mainly by couples in their twenties, engaged in dates. There was only one middle-aged couple.

With Lumian’s acute hearing, it wasn’t challenging for him to catch snippets of conversations at nearby tables, even though he didn’t comprehend most of it. Only a few words stood out.

“Ocean… Pray… Going aboard… Island…”

Could they be discussing the sea prayer ritual next month? Lumian mused, shifting his gaze out the window.

On the street, two young men with long swords on their backs engaged in a heated argument for some reason. Drawing their swords on the spot, they seemed poised for a duel.

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Chapter 538 - 538 Historical Origins

538 Historical Origins

Even through the glass window, Lumian heard the clash of two lads' swords outside.

He couldn't help but raise his eyebrows.

They're really fighting?

Though duels were popular in Trier, it was rare for them to wield weapons without the formalities. Normally, they'd go through the entire process: determine the type of duel—cold weapons or revolvers—sign a contract, find a recognized witness, and then borrow weapons from the café's front desk or the bar counter. Only these duels were legal, avoiding police intervention.

But wielding a longsword at the slightest disagreement was either a prelude to riot or a mob vendetta. Such lethal weapons rarely surfaced in real fights.

Port Santa, or rather, the Feynapotter Kingdom's security is so poor? Lumian was surprised by this.

From the Flying Bird to the Solow Motel, he noticed the locals' penchant for carrying blades and swords, reminiscent of scenes from classical novels.

It was actually legal!

In a maritime colony like Port Farim, openly carrying such items was unheard of. Even a dagger had to be concealed.

For him, though, this was a welcome advantage.

Fascinated, Lumian observed the desperate struggle between the two lads through the window, occasionally commenting on their combat techniques in his mind.

Suddenly, a group of people jogged over from the street.

All women, they wore black cloth hats with white patterns, black lining, and brown leather armor. Dark cloaks adorned with two crossed swords, and brass revolvers strapped to their waists completed their attire.

The woman leading the group seemed to be in her late twenties, with thick, naturally curly black hair, thick eyebrows, large eyes, and plump red lips—

quite beautiful.

Standing at over 1.7 meters tall, she drew a straight sword from her back and called out to the two men fighting on the street with a cold expression.

Lumian only understood the word “stop.”

The two lads truly ceased their actions, standing by the street and accepting the reprimand from the group of women, their imposing demeanor fading.

After a few minutes, they left separately with their swords, not being apprehended.

The language barrier proved quite troublesome.

Lumian wasn’t in a hurry to inquire if he had found a black-market merchant who could craft fake identities. He casually asked, “Is it legal to possess cold weapons in Port Santa?”

Lugano lowered his round-rimmed black hat and dropped his voice.

“That’s right. It’s a local custom. The Feynapotter Kingdom government respects this tradition. Besides, it’s a good thing for them to have more people die in the Gaia Province.”

“Why?” Lumian inquired with interest.

Lugano covered his face with his hand, as if afraid of being followed.

Observing this, Lumian tossed him the Lie earring.

Lugano hurried to the washroom and reverted to his original appearance, albeit his facial features becoming more refined.

Only then did he relax and explain, “Have you ever heard of the Battle of the Violated Oath?”

Lumian, shaped by Aurore’s rigorous education, instinctively replied, “The Battle of the Violated Oath that began in the Fifth Epoch in 738? The one where Lenburg, Masin, Segar, and other small south-central countries were separated from the north of the Feynapotter Kingdom, and the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom broke off from the Church of Earth Mother?”

Lugano was taken aback.

“Yes.”

He only had a rough idea. The other party had actually revealed the exact year and final outcome.

After a few seconds, Lugano lowered his voice and said, “During the Battle of the Violated Oath, the entire Gaia Province, especially those near the Dariège mountain range, attempted to gain independence but failed.

“Later, in order to guard against the natives, despite high-quality iron and coal mines just south of the Dariège Mountains, the Feynapotter Kingdom only set up smelting factories and no gun factories. There wasn’t a single native in the troops stationed here; they were all assigned to other places.

“Was there once a widespread belief in the God of Knowledge and Wisdom here?” Lumian couldn’t help but glance at Ludwig, who was enjoying dessert.

The key to the independence of Lenburg, Masin, Segar, and other countries in the south-central region was their mainstream faith in the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, not the Earth Mother.

“I don’t know,” Lugano honestly shook his head.

Undeterred, he pressed on with the matter at hand.

“You should already know that the ancient Gaia Province mainly comprised four types of people. Firstly, farmers. Secondly, fishermen from places like Port Santa. Thirdly, mountain dwellers who relied on minerals and hunting to survive. Fourthly, the herdsmen you’re familiar with. The latter three are fierce, wielding swords fearlessly in conflicts.”

Lumian nodded.

That was indeed the case.

Whether fishermen, mountain dwellers, or herdsmen, they all lived in relative poverty. They battled nature’s cruelty and faced various dangers beyond human settlements. They even had to be wary of those among them with ill intentions. Swords and blades were necessities, not ornaments.

Lumian had heard firsthand from the migrating herdsmen about wolf pack attacks and the brutality of bandits. It had left a deep impression on him.

“One of Earth Mother’s three combat orders is stationed permanently in Gaia Province. They guard against us in the north and Lenburg in the northeast. Simultaneously, they aim to monitor the locals.

“Heh heh, encountering combat nuns in Gaia Province and Port Santa isn’t uncommon. Their demeanors differ from other women…”

Lugano’s expression shifted to one of leisure and fascination.

The team just now were the combat nuns who maintain order? Lumian realized.

He teased Lugano with a smile, “They’re nuns.”

Lugano smiled enigmatically and remarked, “The nuns of the Earth Mother Church don’t take vows of chastity. Instead, they pledge to have as many children as possible before a certain age. If they’re interested in you, they’ll be quite proactive. Sometimes, they might even push a bit. The young folks here love showcasing their bravery in front of these nuns. Their courage might catch someone’s eye.”

Pledging to have numerous children before a certain age… It sounds peculiar, aligning with Earth Mother’s teachings but reminiscent of another Mother. Local customs, governmental involvement, religious doctrines, and primal courtship behaviors has all woven into the folklore of this place where cold weapons rule the streets. Lumian hadn’t expected such complexity behind a seemingly trivial matter.

Upon reflection, it was rather intriguing.

At that moment, Lumian suddenly understood Aurore’s words from the past.

“If I return to university without life’s pressures, I’d study history.”

Phew… Lumian exhaled slowly and turned to Lugano, “Any progress?”

Lugano, still lost in thoughts about combat nuns, was caught off guard and struggled to snap out of his reverie.

“You Intisians…” Lumian clicked his tongue.

Only then did Lugano grasp the question. He sheepishly smiled and said,

“I’ve made some. I’ve found a well-connected black-market merchant who can help.

“Would you like to meet them? He’s also a descendant of Dariège.”

“Sure.” Lumian finished his coffee and stood up.

…

Trier, fourth level of the catacombs.

Jenna and Franca each gripped a burning white candle, their eyes fixed on the ancient tomb that lay open, hesitant to advance.

No one knew what lay buried inside, and the fear of something terrifying emerging lingered in the air.

In the outer world, the two Demonesses could employ divination to discern the situation. However, in the catacombs, establishing a close connection with the ordinary spirit world was nearly impossible. The outcome was evident.

After all, Lumian couldn't enter through Spirit World Traversal, but he could "teleport" within its confines.

After a brief pause, Franca passed her Mirror Substitution to Jenna and stepped forward with solemn determination. Relying on her spiritual premonition, she cautiously approached the ancient tomb.

As they drew nearer, the dim yellow candlelight revealed a heap of pale-white bones in the entrance area, adorned with light greenish-black mold spots.

Franca raised the white candle, casting its light into the depths of the tomb.

Skeletons lay scattered in disarray, occupying every inch of the ground. In the center, a tilted sarcophagus revealed a multitude of decaying bones.

Franca hesitated for a moment before declaring, "It doesn't seem dangerous."

Only then did Jenna approach, returning the Mirror Substitution.

Franca continued her observation and remarked, "Nothing of value either."

Gems and other items were absent among the burial articles, likely lost during the construction of the catacombs and the opening of these ancient tombs. Everything else had decayed or shattered. Even the murals on the walls bore only faint traces.

Jenna observed for a while and said uncertainly, "What about the area where these bones are pressing down?"

"Let me take a look." Franca moved closer, allowing invisible spider silk to spread and entwine the pale-white bones at the entrance, aiding in their movement.

Suddenly, an irregular mirror fragment, seemingly coated in black paint, materialized in the flames.

Jenna and Franca's eyes narrowed.

It bore a striking resemblance to the Mirror World Fragment they had obtained in Fourth Epoch Trier!

"Did a special Mirror Person once die here?" Franca mused. "Did Krismona's shadow appear here to inform us? But why did She attack us?"

Jenna shared the perplexity. After a moment of thought, she said, "Why did the special Mirror Person die here? Who owns this tomb? Or rather, which ancient family does it belong to?"

Franca stared for a moment before nodding solemnly.

"That might be our next investigation."

Finding no anomalies, the duo stored away the mirror fragment. Utilizing the formless spider silk of the Demoness of Pleasure, they meticulously searched the entire tomb but found nothing that identified the tomb owner.

Franca sighed and said, “Well, we’ll unravel it when we get back. Let’s go acquire an antique tearcatcher for the employer now.”

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Chapter 539 - 539 Information on the Sea Prayer Ritual

539 Information on the Sea Prayer Ritual

Lumian and Lugano, their appearances altered and attire changed, met the black-market merchant claiming lineage to Dariège.

Seated at the head of the table, he sported a white shirt and a black vest, a glass of pale malt-colored white wine at his fingertips and a slowly burning cigar between them.

He did embody the heritage of the Dariège region with slightly sunken eye sockets, slightly curled black hair, and piercing blue eyes reminiscent of a cloudless sky over a towering mountain. His thin cheeks and thick stubble suggested a man in his thirties.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Valerio,” Lugano greeted in Highlander.

Valerio, casting a glance at his armed bodyguards, responded with a smile in Intisian, flavored with a distinct Dariège accent.

“It’s been a long time since I’ve returned home. It’s a pleasure to see you.”

“Indeed, Mr. Valerio,” Lumian replied in Intisian, his voice also tinged with a Dariège accent.

While shepherds excelled at navigating the perils of the wilderness, an inherent wariness of authorities in settled human areas lingered.

Valerio nodded subtly and inquired, “Did you come from Larnaca?”

“Yes, I just finished attending the trade fair there,” Lumian replied smoothly.

Having learned about Larnaca from the shepherds in Cordu, Lumian was well aware of the monthly trade fair that transformed the suburbs into a bustling marketplace. Shepherds from far and wide flocked to the event, seizing opportunities to trade lamb, wool, cheese, and other goods.

Valerio then delved into the topic of migration and Dariège’s folklore. Lumian, well-versed in the subject from a shepherd’s perspective, provided insightful answers.

In the midst of the conversation, he felt a bit disoriented. Recollections of his sister's occasional threats echoed in his mind: "If you don't study hard, I'll send you off to be a shepherd!"

Now, irony had it that he found himself playing the role of a shepherd.

After some time, Valerio nodded in satisfaction and took a puff of his cigar.

"You're quite wise. Grazing in the suburbs doesn't require identification, but settling in the city requires it. I'll get you two sets as soon as possible. In the future, if you encounter any difficulties, you can come to me. I might not be of much help, but having one more person will give you more ideas. We're all from Dariège, so we naturally have to have each other's backs."

Lumian wasn't surprised by the black-market merchant's enthusiasm.

Uniting the people of one's homeland would create an exploitable force that couldn't be ignored!

It was reminiscent of the Savoie Mob. In the beginning, the pioneers, mostly Savoyards working as laborers and attendants, paved the way for the big bosses of the Savoie Chamber of Commerce. They expanded operations, safeguarded assets, and contributed immeasurably.

Lumian applied the acting techniques learned from Jenna and Anthony Reid's guidance to commend Valerio's noble character.

"If you want to survive here, it's best to convert to Earth Mother as soon as possible. Find a good lady to marry and have a few children as soon as possible. Only then will you avoid hidden trouble."

Is urging marriage and childbearing a tradition in the Feynapotter Kingdom? Lumian criticized and smiled bitterly.

"Without copper coins, there won't be any good girls."

This Dariège proverb echoed in the room, signifying the difficulty for the poor, especially shepherds, to attract fine ladies and start families.

"This is Feynapotter, not Dariège," Valerio remarked, taking a sip of his white wine. "The good ladies here value robust bodies and bravery. The money can wait after you get married."

Perplexed, Lumian questioned, "Why?

"Men like that are more suited for reproduction, and they possess the ability to impregnate good ladies," Valerio explained with a smile. "This place is different from Dariège. The essence of many things lies in fertility and reproduction. Only by understanding this can you truly understand Feynapotter and praise the mother of all things!"

The black-market merchant rose, spreading his feet slightly and raising his hands high.

No wonder Feynapotter teems with people in the Northern Continent. Without their knack for land improvement and food cultivation, sustaining such a population would be impossible. Lumian's thoughts raced as he probed,

"Mr. Valerio, I heard there's a sea prayer ritual next month. Any chance to make some money?"

"Yes," Valerio replied, taking a seat. "Port Santa stays relatively warm in November. When my grandfather first came, he rented a wooden box to store popsicles, gathered a pile of ice from the factory, and covered them up. Then, he waded into the crowd, selling popsicles and ice cubes, earning his first bucket of gold. You can still do it now, but the competition is fiercer. You might even need to rent a bicycle for a larger thermal wooden box to hit more ritual venues."

"Many ritual venues?" Lumian asked.

Valerio replied with a smile, "This is a grand event for all of Port Santa. Different processes happen in various places. There's the Dance of the Sea at the port, a parade of flower boats across the city, a sea boat race, the vigil ritual in Milo Village, and the core sea sacrifice."

"What's the sea sacrifice?" Lumian inquired curiously.

Valerio slowly shook his head.

"I don't know the specifics. All I know is that the Governor of the Sea and the Maidens of the Sea board a special boat, head to a certain area beyond the port with sacrifices from fishermen and sea merchants, and perform a unique ritual. The detailed process is known only to those who've been there."

"The Governor of the Sea, the Maidens of the Sea?" Lumian kept picking keywords.

This perfectly aligned with the situation of a Dariège shepherd who had just arrived in Port Santa.

Valerio smiled and said, "The crucial part of the Sea Prayer Ritual is selecting a man as the Governor of the Sea and four girls as the Maidens of the Sea. They'll lead a parade through the city on a flower boat before boarding a special fishing boat at the port. Sailing during the Dance of the Sea, they signal the start of the race. Later, they circle the port, entering the oldest local fishing village, Milo, for a night.

"At 7 a.m. the next morning, they reboard the boat and head to the sea sacrificial ground with the offerings."

The chosen Governor of the Sea and the Maidens of the Sea… A sea prayer ritual with multiple segments… Lumian repeated the key parts inwardly.

Suddenly, his heart skipped a beat as he made a connection.

This was very similar to the Lent celebration in the Dariège mountains and the Spring Elf!

Doesn't the sea prayer ritual here resemble the Lent celebration?

Upon second thought, Lumian felt that the similarity didn't explain the issue.

This was a common process in mysticism—the creation of a specific symbol to represent the sacrificial target to achieve the desired effect.

This was evident in many folklore rituals.

"How are the Governor of the Sea and the Maidens of the Sea chosen?" Lumian asked curiously.

Could it be, like the Spring Elf, they're elected by all the residents of Port Santa?

Could one gain a high reputation and enjoy hidden benefits after the ritual?

Valerio took another drag from his cigar.

"They're chosen by the committee members of the Fisheries Guild, the oldest guild in Port Santa. They keep the specific criteria and whether they want to vote a secret. Even the official members of the Fisheries Guild don't know."

With that, the black-market merchant grinned.

"I also aim to become the Governor of the Sea. They say it comes with many perks, but no one spills the details."

"How have the previous Governors of the Sea fared?" Lumian was more concerned about this matter.

Valerio was taken aback. He thought for a moment before shaking his head.

"I'm not sure.

"Each Governor of the Sea serves only a one-year term. Once they step down, they seem to be relocated. Anyway, they can't stick around in Port Santa to avoid clashes with the new Governor. Heh heh, they're surely offered hefty compensation and allowed to bring their families."

Relocated? Were they truly relocated, or did they face something else? Lumian, drawing from past experiences, couldn't help but think of something ominous and dreadful in the face of such a ritualistic folklore.

Regarding the Governor of the Sea's subsequent experiences during the sea prayer ritual, it did sound peculiar.

Lumian thought for a moment and, adopting the tone befitting his current guise, inquired, "What about the Maidens of the Sea?"

"They're a hit among sea merchants, fishing company shareholders, and fishermen and sailors. Everyone wants to wed the Maidens of the Sea, a symbol of the sea's blessing. Explore various fishing villages, the Fisheries Guild, and the homes of sea merchants, and you'll find many influential grandmothers who were once Maidens of the Sea." Valerio's face brimmed with envy, as if he too harbored dreams of marrying a Maiden of the Sea and becoming a true sea merchant.

This mirrors the hidden benefits of being a Spring Elf… Lumian suppressed the urge to raise his right hand and stroke his chin.

Knowing when to cease, he refrained from pressing further. After depositing 50 gold risot, he exited Valerio's illegal casino with Lugano.

Ludwig didn't come with them. Instead, he was stationed in a nearby family restaurant equipped with a children's entertainment facility, overseen by specialized caretakers and a provided meal.

In Feynapotter, numerous industries supported parents in raising children and alleviating stress. Intis and other countries lacked such facilities, and even if they existed, they were accessible only to the elite.

…

Trier, catacombs.

Franca and Jenna descended to the third level with their flickering white candles.

Feeling a bit less stifled, Franca turned her head and inquired, "What's the name of the tomb we're after?"

Jenna didn't hesitate and replied, "The Thorn and Shieldwall Tomb."

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Chapter 540 - 540 Entrustee

540 Entrustee

“Aren’t you tired of this? Can’t you try something different?” she cursed, turning her head to inspect the road sign beside her.

It indicated they had finally reached their destination.

Each level of the catacombs sprawled vast, evident by the multitude of remains it accommodated. The road signs at each node could only display seven or eight iconic names and nearby tombs. Franca and Jenna relied on returning to the small sacrificial square and starting anew to locate the Thorns and Shieldwall Tomb.

Unlike the fourth-level tomb, mostly sealed off and devoid of corpses and bones along the way, this place was strewn with scattered bones and decaying items, emitting a faint, uncomfortable stench.

Jenna glanced at the pile of bones outside and observed a few thin metal plates inlaid on the tomb wall. Their surfaces were blurry, showing signs of severe corrosion. Only the shieldwall and thorn symbol could be vaguely discerned. Whether there were other patterns remained impossible to tell.

“No wonder it’s called the Thorns and Shieldwall Tomb.” Franca sighed.

Simultaneously, illuminated by the dim yellow candlelight, she noticed companion items arranged in a groove on the tomb’s inner wall. Some were made of wood, weathered and decayed, while others were glass and porcelainware, in the form of fragments. The only intact item was a glass bottle, its surface inlaid with carved patterns resembling gold and adorned with a unique golden lid. Perhaps due to the metal’s protection, the glass bottle didn’t shatter, but it appeared murky and less transparent.

“It’s exquisite, almost like art,” Franca commented, puzzled. “Why didn’t the catacomb workers take it away?”

It seemed quite valuable!

“Perhaps it was placed in this tomb after the catacombs were completed,” Jenna speculated.

The two Demonesses didn’t linger on the topic. Jenna retrieved one of the Mirror Substitutions and handed it to Franca.

With a swift leap, Franca vaulted over the seemingly silent but dangerous skeletons, gracefully landing at the entrance of the Thorns and Shieldwall Tomb.

After confirming her surroundings and receiving no warnings from her spirituality, Jenna cautiously approached the groove on the side wall along the ground, avoiding the pale-white bones.

Instinctively, she reached out with her right hand but withdrew it. An old handkerchief from her pocket was produced, shielding her palm from direct contact with the antique tearcatcher.

The tears in the tearcatcher had long dried up.

Jenna scrutinized the tearcatcher for a moment before stowing it away. She retraced her steps and leaped to Franca's side.

"You completed the commission so easily?" she whispered uncertainly.

It was a stark contrast to the disappearance of the Deep Valley Cloister's gatekeeper she had previously accepted.

Franca scoffed and replied, "What kind of difficulty do you want for a 1,000 verl d'or commission?"

…

As Lumian, reverting to Louis Berry, strode into the front hall, his gaze fell upon a vibrant scene. A young brown-haired girl, clad in a red dress adorned with black patterns, swayed gracefully in a corner. From time to time, she paused to refine her dance moves.

Lumian's thoughts raced as he approached the front desk. Seizing the opportunity, he inquired, "What's she doing?"

This time, he spoke in Intisian.

The grizzled boss, his cheekbones etched with sunburnt marks, appeared taken aback. Responding in Intisian with a Dariège accent, he explained, "She's my granddaughter, Isabella. She's practicing the Dance of the Sea for the performance next month."

"Dance of the Sea… Dance of the Sea for the sea prayer ritual?" Lumian hadn't anticipated this revelation. Instinctively, he smiled and remarked, "That would make many girls jealous, wouldn't it?"

The boss grinned.

"This isn't like becoming a Maiden of the Sea. Not many people will be jealous, but participating in the Dance of the Sea performance can indeed make her proud and happy for a long time."

As Lumian signaled for Lugano to guide Ludwig back to their room, he casually inquired of the boss, “Did you come from Dariège?”

“That’s right. I’m a Guillaume,” the boss said with a self-deprecating smile. “Otta Guillaume. When I saw your identification this morning, I thought about greeting you in Intisian, but I gave up in the end. You know, Intisians aren’t the best bunch. Even among my fellow villagers, I’ve come across a few with questionable morals.”

“How long have you been in Port Santa?” Lumian asked with genuine interest, resting his right elbow on the front desk.

Otta Sr. pondered seriously.

“Forty years, I reckon. Probably forty years. Back then, I was an assistant in a caravan. I met my wife here and decided to stay. Heh heh, she’s now a nagging old lady. Always fussing about how to dress when it gets cold or reminding me to head home for dinner, leaving the motel to the assistants. She manages everything so well that I don’t have to worry. How great is that? It’s rare to encounter such a woman in Dariège.”

Lumian endured Otta Sr.’s ramblings for a while before cutting to the chase.

“I’ve been invited by a friend to Port Santa to witness the sea prayer ritual.”

“It’s quite lively. The entire port will be in euphoria,” Otta Sr. praised without hesitation.

Lumian cast a glance at Isabella, still engrossed in her practice, and casually remarked, “I heard there was an accident at last year’s sea prayer ritual?”

“No?” Otta Sr. responded with a puzzled expression. “I watched the flower boat parade, the boat race, and the Dance of the Sea. There were no accidents.”

Frowning, he fell into deep thought.

“However, Sandro did mention that the number of shipwrecks has increased significantly this year. We’ve encountered more pirates, and our fishing gains haven’t been as good as last year’s… Was there really an accident at last year’s sea prayer ritual? Was it the vigil ritual or the sea sacrifice? Did the old fogeys at the Fisheries Guild conceal the problem?

“Who’s Sandro?” Lumian pressed.

Otta Sr. smiled again.

“It’s my child, Isabella’s father. He works as a clerk in the government, and his wife is a teacher at the grammar school.”

Is Port Santa's sea prayer ritual genuinely effective? Has its protective power diminished after the April Fool's prank? Lumian's mind flashed with the information he'd gathered earlier.

The elderly's mix of shock, terror, and anger upon receiving the news was a source of long-lasting delight for the April Fool's participants.

After seeking more details about the sea prayer ritual, Lumian bid farewell to Ol' Otta and ascended to his suite upstairs.

…

At 4 p.m. in Trier, Quartier de l'Observatoire, near Place du Purgatoire.

After donning a hooded black robe and transforming her face into the dramatic persona of Showy Diva, Jenna followed the feedback from her contact and reached a street that specialized in funeral items.

Most Trieriens passing by appeared fairly ordinary, but a handful sported white masks, brandished blunt scythes, and adorned themselves in black robes. They posed as undead messengers from folklore, sewing white skulls and other artistic elements onto their shoulders…

Thanks to their presence and the unique atmosphere of Trier, Jenna, dressed as a warlock with a hood concealing her features, blended seamlessly into the surroundings.

She paused in a quiet corner and retrieved the exquisite tearcatcher.

Before long, someone resembling her approached and, in a gravelly voice, inquired, "How much for this tearcatcher?"

"1,000 verl d'or," Jenna responded, her excitement bubbling.

This marked her first successfully executed commission.

"1,001 verl d'or," countered the warlock-dressed man.

Upon the secret signal matching, Jenna insisted on charging only 1,000 verl d'or.

Once the confirmation was mutual, she handed over the tearcatcher, received the reward, and discreetly departed.

With the tearcatcher in hand, the hooded figure navigated the nearby streets, taking nearly fifteen minutes to circle back to Place du Purgatoire and approach a street bench at the edge.

A man sat there, engrossed in a newspaper.

The hooded figure presented the exquisite tearcatcher, adorned with intricate hollowed-out golden patterns, and whispered, “I’ve completed your commission. Will it offset the money I owe you?”

The person on the bench lowered the newspaper, looked up, revealing a clerk with curly black hair, sunken eyes, and thick lips. A crystal-like monocle adorned his right eye.

“Monsieur Monette?” the hooded figure pressed in confirmation.

Monette accepted the tearcatcher, gently tracing the golden patterns with a slow smile playing on his lips.

…

Solow Motel, fifth-floor suite.

Lumian spent the entire afternoon within the confines of his room at the Solow Motel. Lounging on a recliner, he swayed gently, engrossed in his ongoing study of Highlander. Now and then, he leafed through travel books detailing the customs of the Feynapotter Kingdom.

As evening approached, Lugano, who had ventured downstairs for a chat, returned to Lumian’s room.

Leaning in, Lugano lowered his voice and shared, “Boss, there’s a Madame looking for you.”

Madame… Lumian felt a chill run down his spine upon hearing that term, and the muscles in his back tensed.

Which “Madame” could this be?

After a brief pause, Lumian realized that Lugano was referring to an ordinary Madame, not the “Madame” of the Beyonder world.

“Which Madame, and what brings her here?” Lumian inquired calmly, sitting up and addressing his translator.

Lugano shook his head and replied, “She didn’t say. Just mentioned having something to entrust to the renowned adventurer, Louis Berry.”

Lugano emphasized the term “renowned adventurer.”

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Chapter 541 - 541 Simple Entrustment

541 Simple Entrustment

He stood up and said to Lugano, “Invite that Madame in.”

With those words, Lumian stooped to pick up the distinctive golden straw hat from the small round table. He aimed to make Louis Berry’s image more memorable, adding a touch of flair to his persona.

In no time, Lugano escorted a woman in her thirties into the room.

She wore a loose-fitting white dress adorned with red flowers, accentuating her curves.

Port Santa’s women, in contrast to the Dariège region just across the mountain, favored glamorous and stylish attire, embodying a romantic and liberated aesthetic —reflecting the traditional taste of the Feynapotter Kingdom.

The lady, with long brown hair tied up and a healthy complexion, entered without a maid. Her azure eyes, framed by thick eyelashes, focused on Lumian, who held the golden straw hat.

Her red lips moved, and though Lumian couldn’t grasp every word, the name “Louis Berry” was discernible in her pronunciation.

Promptly, Lugano initiated the translation.

“The Madame says, Honorable Monsieur Louis Berry, I’ve heard about your hunt of the Demon Warlock. I wonder if you’re willing to help my family solve a problem.”

Lumian’s gaze shifted from the jeweled bead bracelet on the lady’s wrist to her beautiful and mature face.

“What’s your name?”

“Giorgia,” the lady replied after Lugano translated.

Lumian repeated, acknowledging the lady’s name with a smile,

“Madame Giorgia, what would you like to entrust me with?”

Giorgia listened attentively to Lugano’s translation and spoke in Highlander with a slight local accent, “An evil creature has appeared in my household. I need your

help eliminating it."

Lumian, though grasping the gist, awaited Lugano's translation by casting his gaze at him.

When Lugano conveyed Giorgia's words in Intisian, Lumian chuckled and said, "I'm sorry, I forgot to invite the beautiful Madame to have a seat.

"The great adventurer Gehrman Sparrow taught us that manners are very important."

Gesturing toward the sofa, Lumian settled onto the divan, attempting to caress Ludwig's head, like a godfather.

As Giorgia took her place in an armchair, Lumian, shaking his golden straw hat, leaned forward.

Giorgia looked at Lugano and listened attentively.

She pursed her thick lips and replied in Highlander,

"We don't want the Church to know about this. It will damage our family's reputation."

Is that why you are entrusting me, a foreigner who will leave after watching the sea prayer ritual? And that's after confirming my ability to deal with that evil creature… Lumian, pondering this choice, shifted his gaze away from Lugano. After a brief pause, he inquired, "Tell me more about that evil creature."

After a brief pause, Giorgia contemplated and then shared, "It resembles a tailless lizard. It attacked everyone in the household, killing a few maids and valets and devoured their bodies.

"Our family's bodyguards fired on it and injured it, but they failed to kill it because it has very strong scales. We could only chase it to the basement and lock it up.

"We thought it would slowly starve to death from hunger and thirst. To our surprise, nearly two weeks later, it's still alive and trying to break open the basement door."

It doesn't seem very dangerous. They could repel it with ordinary firearms… They didn't mention why the lizard appeared. It appears that this is why they aren't willing to seek out the Church of Earth Mother and the local government to handle it… Lumian thoughtfully compared the few words he understood to the content translated by Lugano and confirmed that the guide hadn't embellished or redacted any content.

Lumian then casually inquired, "Were there any casualties among the bodyguards?"

Giorgia, after the translation, shook her head slowly.

“No fatalities. Two were injured, but nothing severe. Yes, that monster made the entire room feel like it had been dragged into the deep sea, affecting normal movements.”

As if dragged into the deep sea… There’s indeed certain Beyonder phenomena, but it seems relatively weak… Deep sea… Lumian’s interest was piqued as he earnestly inquired about the details.

After a series of responses, Giorgia said gently, “Monsieur Louis Berry, we’re willing to pay you 15,000 risot, but you have to promise not to publicize this matter.”

15,000 gold risot? According to your description, the monster is worth at most 5,000 gold risot. The remaining 10,000 should be a hush money, right? Lumian smiled and said in broken Highlander, “Sure thing.”

Rising from his seat, Lumian announced in Intisian, “I want to observe the situation at the scene.”

Giorgia stood up and listened to Lugano’s translation.

She wasn’t surprised by Louis Berry’s request. Familiar with adventurers and bounty hunters, she understood the importance of assessing the situation firsthand and making thorough preparations. It meant survivability or success for the elites.

“Now?” Giorgia sought confirmation.

Lumian comprehended the word and affirmed in Highlander, “Now.”

Adorning his golden straw hat, he made his way to the door, supplementing in Intisian, “Also, prepare a sumptuous dinner for me, my godson, and my translator.”

Giorgia, slightly taken aback by the translation, watched Lumian’s departure. She couldn’t shake the feeling that this adventurer possessed a distinct quality compared to those she had encountered before.

…

Port Santa, Saint Lana Street.

Giorgia’s residence occupied number 21 on this street. The five-story villa boasted brownish-red outer walls, adorned with statues of Angels and Saintesses from the Earth Mother Church, along with symbols depicting waves and fishing.

Wearing his distinctive golden straw hat and holding Ludwig’s hand, the latter carrying a red school bag, Lumian trailed behind Giorgia, accompanied by her maid and valet. Together, they entered the villa’s hall, which also served as a

spacious dance floor beneath a tall, dome ceiling.

As Lumian stepped inside, he felt unseen eyes upon him from the circular railings on the upper floors.

It's indeed a household with multiple families sharing one roof. There are quite a few people… Lumian mused, choosing not to look up, smiling inwardly.

The concealed observers remained hidden. Giorgia then summoned two legally armed bodyguards, leading Lumian and the entourage down to the second basement where the iron-black door stood tightly shut.

As if sensing someone approaching, the door slammed as if struck by a powerful force.

"It's inside," Giorgia stated, pointing at the iron door with a complicated expression.

Lumian, understanding without the need for translation, pressed down on his golden straw hat and directed, "Take my godson to the living room for pre-

dinner dessert."

As he spoke, he strode towards the subterranean iron door without a backward glance.

Upon hearing Lugano's translation, Giorgia and the maid hastily guided Ludwig back to the surface. A bodyguard caught up to Lumian, his expression serious, and handed him a pewter-black key.

Without delay, the two bodyguards drew their revolvers, positioning themselves to aim at the iron door, preventing the monster from escaping.

Lumian methodically inserted the key into the lock, unlocking it.

He tossed the key aside and effortlessly pushed the iron door open with one hand.

In an instant, the monster's figure came into view.

A humanoid lizard, adorned with glistening, robust scales, met Lumian's eyes. Where there were no scales, smooth, sinister snake-like skin was exposed.

The monster's eyes were vertical, and they glowed with a nearly transparent light. Its mouth harbored sharp teeth that formed a menacing vortex.

Simultaneously, Lumian felt the air around him grow dense, like shackles enveloping him, clearly impeding his normal movements.

The moisture gave the sensation of plunging into the deep sea, enduring pressure from all directions.

The humanoid lizard lunged forward, and Lumian's body leaned towards the enemy as if pulled by a vortex.

Yet, the obvious smile on his lips persisted as he calmly attempted to pivot.

Suddenly, a latent power surged within him, allowing him to break free from the air's constraints.

Lumian swiftly rotated his body, swinging his right fist from below.

Instantly, crimson flames, nearly white, ignited from his fist, spreading to his forearm, resembling a dazzling fire serpent.

Bang!

The punch struck the humanoid lizard's chest and abdomen, causing the flames to compress.

Boom!

The humanoid lizard was sent flying, crystalline scales splattering from its chest and abdomen, resulting in a massive wound.

Lumian didn't give chase. With one hand in his pocket, he changed his right fist to a palm and gently pushed forward.

Crimson, nearly white fireballs materialized before him, whistling into the wound on the lizard's chest and abdomen.

Rumble!

The monster disintegrated, its flesh and blood splattering across the ground.

Lumian observed for a few moments before adjusting his golden straw hat. He turned around and walked towards the stairs leading to the surface.

The two armed and vigilant bodyguards maintained their original posture, still in a daze, unable to comprehend what had transpired.

Lumian didn't "rouse" them as he ascended the stairs.

Upon hearing the explosion, Giorgia, on the ground, left the lounge with Lugano and approached the staircase. She saw Lumian coming up.

"Have you confirmed the situation?" Madame Giorgia asked with concern.

Lumian replied with a smirk, "It's resolved."

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Chapter 542 - 542 Abnormal Situation

542 Abnormal Situation

It's resolved? It's already resolved? Giorgia suspected that the translator had made a mistake. Instinctively, she asked, "Is there a quick solution, or has it already been resolved?"

Lugano cast a sympathetic glance at the beautiful madame, experiencing the same emotions he felt when reading about how his employer had slain the Demon Warlock.

How could a monster confined to the basement by ordinary armed bodyguards compare to Burman, who had a bounty of 600,000 verl d'or?

Despite finding it unnecessary, Lugano respectfully conveyed Giorgia's words to Lumian.

Lumian removed the golden straw hat from his head and said, "You may instruct the servants to clean the basement."

Upon hearing Lugano's translation, Giorgia's pupils dilated as she looked at Lumian in bewilderment, unsure of what to say.

At that moment, a bodyguard guarding the basement ran up. Upon seeing Giorgia, he immediately leaned over, lowered his voice, and whispered something to her.

Giorgia's expression shifted a few times before she smiled and said to Lumian, "As expected of the renowned adventurer. I previously suspected that your hunt for the Demon Warlock was merely a rumor. Now, I completely believe it. Your might is enough to resound throughout the Five Seas."

She paused for a moment and said apologetically, "I'm sorry; we haven't had time to prepare dinner. We might need you to wait in the lounge for a while."

"Better to have me wait than a beautiful lady," Lumian replied with a smile.

That's basic courtesy!

He followed Giorgia's maid into the lounge specially catered for Ludwig to enjoy the pre-dinner dessert.

Giorgia and her bodyguard descended into the basement.

A sense of relief washed over her as she surveyed the blood-stained room, finding no trace of the humanoid lizard; it had completely vanished.

Dinner unfolded in a private chamber, exclusive to Lumian, his companions, and Giorgia. The lady's maid attended to them, serving dishes and pouring wine.

Lumian, intrigued by his surroundings, noted how the expansive mansion accommodated the needs of its diverse occupants. Small private rooms outside the grand banquet hall ensured the privacy of gatherings.

The meal was a delight for everyone. Lumian received 15,000 risot in banknotes; Giorgia appeared visibly at ease; Ludwig appreciated the villa's chefs; and Lugano experienced a high-end banquet for the first time.

The great adventurer, usually one to boast and joke while not in his monster-

hunting cold persona, lightened the atmosphere at the dining table.

This pleasant ambiance continued until Lumian departed from 21 Saint Lana Street alongside Ludwig and Lugano.

Lugano, slightly flushed from the white wine, gazed back at the brightly lit building and sighed deeply.

"I wonder when I'll have a house this grand, with numerous servants and chefs, and a wife like Giorgia."

Lumian teased, "Your emphasis is on the last part, isn't it?"

Lugano chuckled sheepishly and replied, "Well, based on your description, I might as well have been capable of taking down that humanoid lizard too."

It meant he possessed the skills to tackle a mission worth 30,000 verl d'or!

With a few more successful missions, Lugano's dream could become a reality!

"With guns and special bullets prepared in advance, coupled with ample combat experience, a Planter is indeed capable," Lumian carefully assessed his guide.

He avoided using "Doctor" to refer to Lugano, as this Sequence primarily bestowed healing superpowers and didn't offer significant improvement in combat.

Lugano was delighted to hear this, sensing a newfound hope in his life.

Lumian glanced at him and added with a smile, "However, if you were to accept this commission, the reward might only be two to three thousand risot.

"The rest accounts for the premium based on the great adventurer's reputation and the hush money for such a renowned figure.

“That’s why you need to hunt down Demon Warlock before you can accept such a lucrative mission.”

The smile on Lugano’s face gradually faded.

If I could hunt down Demon Warlock, my dream would be fulfilled. I wouldn’t have to be an adventurer!

Lumian paid no mind to the translator’s emotional shifts. He glanced back at the large five-story villa and said thoughtfully, “The Matriarch of this family didn’t appear even until the end…”

While it was understandable that the other family members hadn’t shown themselves, logically speaking, as the head of the family, the Matriarch should have at least expressed her gratitude to the adventurer who had helped them resolve the problem.

“That’s correct. A woman of Giorgia’s age shouldn’t be the head of such a large family,” Lugano acknowledged, sensing the anomaly.

He refrained from bringing up the potential absence of a Matriarch in the villa. In extended families like this, there were likely more than one older woman who had given birth. If one Matriarch passed away, another would soon assume the role. Additionally, the Earth Mother Church was renowned for its adept treatment of illnesses in the Northern and Southern Continents. The Feynapotter Kingdom’s average lifespan surpassed that of Loen, Intis, Feysac, and other nations. Plenty of individuals lived beyond the age of 70, especially with Giorgia’s family’s wealth providing ample medical resources.

Lumian averted his gaze and took a few steps.

“Go to the bar tonight and inquire about Giorgia’s family.”

As he spoke, he counted out 1,000 risot for Lugano.

“This covers your expenses for your activities during this period, including Ludwig’s meal expenses when I’m out.”

“Yes, Boss.” Lugano appreciated his employer’s generosity the most.

Near midnight, the Doctor returned to the suite at Solow Motel, reeking of alcohol. He addressed Lumian, who was observing Ludwig eat supper, “I got the info. Giorgia is the wife of Rubió Paco, a shareholder of Port Santa’s Fisheries Company and a committee member of the Fisheries Guild. The Paco family’s Matriarch is Rubio’s mother, Martha.”

Committee member of the Fisheries Guild… Lumian instantly focused.

This was a person knowledgeable about the complete process of the sea prayer ritual and the accident from last year.

“What else did you find out?” Lumian asked casually.

Lugano rambled on for a while before adding, “By the way, Martha was once a Maiden of the Sea.”

Maiden of the Sea… Lumian pondered for a few seconds. She had been sought after by a specific crowd before marrying into the Paco family? He asked, “Did you find out anything about Martha’s recent situation?”

“No.” Lugano shook his head.

Lumian leaned back in his chair, as if preparing to doze off, not pressing for more information.

The next day, he stayed at the Solow Motel, awaiting Valerio’s preparations for his local identification documents.

As evening approached, his messenger, Penitent Baynfel, emerged from the void and handed him a letter.

Lumian glanced at the charred corpse, still engulfed in viscous black flames, and casually asked, “Who sent it?”

Only five people were aware of his messenger’s summoning incantation.

“A woman very close to death and darkness,” Baynfel replied.

Lumian unfolded the letter and read the familiar handwriting: “There’s a gathering scheduled for 10 tonight…”

This was from Hela. Before leaving Trier, Lumian had specifically summoned Hela’s messenger and informed her of his messenger’s summoning method. With his frequent travel and changes in residence, it was impractical to summon Hela’s messenger each time he stayed in a motel. Hence, he made such arrangements to convenience her in getting him.

Each messenger was intricately bound to its master. Through the mystical connection of the contract, the messenger could track the contracted target regardless of their changing locations.

The Research Society has another gathering… Lumian dismissed Baynfel and moved to the window of the master bedroom.

He peered into the distance, toward the mottled mountain range to the northeast.

Under the afterglow of the setting sun, the mountains seemed to doze in the burning sky.

Lumian silently observed for a moment, then retrieved the silver Lie earring and placed it on his left earlobe.

In an instant, his hair transformed, turning golden and elongating downward.

…

At 10 p.m., in the ancient and dilapidated palace of the Nation of the Evernight, Lumian, cloaked in a black robe, hood, and a silver-white half-

mask with a “Muggle” label, materialized.

He immediately spotted Franca, who wore an Assassin suit and had pulled down her hood.

Franca, no longer concealing their amicable relationship, leaned in and lowered her voice.

“Port Santa didn’t have a Derangement outbreak, I suppose?”

“I’m not the embodiment of calamity,” Lumian replied.

He then said to Franca, “Help me inquire in different teams later if there are any potions, charms, or items that can allow me to master a language in a short period of time—not true mastery, but the kind that allows mastery for a short period.”

Franca asked in confusion, “Don’t you have a translator?”

Lumian smiled and said, “It’s just that I suddenly had an idea. When everyone thinks I don’t know Highlander, I can understand what they’re talking about. Perhaps it can bring about unexpected gains.”

Your scheming heart is truly stained! After Franca playfully cursed him, she wanted to praise Aurore’s beautiful lips and smile, one that ought to be seen more often, but her rationality made her give up on the idea to avoid triggering Lumian.

She glanced at a corner of the palace and said, “The team most likely to obtain such items is actually the Academy. However, it’s inconvenient for you to ask. It can easily arouse suspicion. Coincidentally, I’m heading to the Academy team today to inquire if anyone knows who the owners of the ancient tombs in Trier’s catacombs are. Heh heh, many of them are considered semi-historians. If no one knows, I’ll get 007 to delve into the Church’s confidential information.”

“Why do you ask?” Lumian raised his eyebrows.

Franca recounted how she and Jenna had obtained a new Mirror World Fragment in the catacombs.

Lumian listened attentively and scoffed.

“Aren’t you guys too bold? Jenna has been inspired by your courage!”

As soon as he finished speaking, he saw 007 approaching menacingly.

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Chapter 543 - 543 Same Dream

543 Same Dream

Wearing a lion headgear, 007 intercepted Franca's path, gritting his teeth.

"Hidden Blade, thanks to your intel, I might be deployed on a mission right now."

"Huh?" Franca didn't quite get it.

Deployed on a mission? If you're out, who do I report problems to in Trier?

007 glanced at Muggle, standing silently beside them, and took a deep breath.

"I might head to Feynapotter as an assistant to retrieve that Sealed Artifact.

"It's Intis' loss, and it wouldn't be good for it to end up in the hands of the Feynapotter Kingdom."

"Will the Feynapotterians allow you to enforce the law in their country? Isn't transnational cooperation troublesome?" Franca roughly understood 007's concerns.

007 pondered for a moment and said, "We're still working through the process, but the Feynapotterians aren't too opposed this time. They want to eliminate the hidden dangers of the Sealed Artifact ASAP. They have precautions to take and can't spare many to surround and intercept it, so they might as well borrow our strength."

The Church of Earth Mother and the Feynapotter Kingdom need to be vigilant. Are they short on manpower? This is a problem with a single Church country. They don't have the resources like a combination of two or three Churches. Wait, that doesn't make sense. The Feynapotter Kingdom has a royal family, and Beyonders of the Church don't only follow the pathway of their deity. Lumian sensed something amiss from 007's words.

This made him feel that the hidden dangers in the Feynapotter Kingdom were no less than those in countries with multiple deities and Churches.

"Is that so…" Franca suddenly had an idea. "I have a way to ensure you don't have to be deployed!"

"What way?" 007 asked skeptically.

Franca smiled and said, “If you’re on an important mission in Trier, there’s no need for you to be deployed.”

“Important mission…” 007 repeated in a low voice, suddenly having an ominous feeling.

Franca seized the opportunity and said, “We’ve located another Mirror World Fragment in an ancient tomb on the fourth level of the catacombs.”

“Now, we have a lead to pursue the Mirror People in Trier. If you report it and convey that you’re conducting an investigation, you likely won’t end up in Feynapotter.”

007 stared at Franca, dressed in an assassin suit, for a moment. He raised his hand to rub his forehead and spoke gravely, “Thanks a lot, Hidden Blade!”

Franca pretended not to catch 007’s underlying message and continued, “The tomb is situated near the Crazy Mushroom Cave. Its door is wide open, and there are no conspicuous signs. Please gather information from the catacombs about its construction date, its occupants, and the ancient family it belongs to. Only then can we determine why the peculiar Mirror People entered and met their demise there.”

007 took a deep breath and slowly exhaled.

“You’re a perfect boss for me.”

All you know is to assign me missions!

Franca let out a hollow laugh and shifted the topic.

“Do you have any idea what’s happening in the Crazy Mushroom Cave? Mushrooms are somehow thriving in that silent, dark, and tightly sealed place. Moreover, it seems to be the only location in the fourth-level catacombs where mushrooms grow.”

007 nodded gently and replied, “I have some knowledge about that. Once upon a time, I was quite intrigued by the mushroom cave. I conducted an investigation and discovered that it was initially quite ordinary—a naturally formed cave among the ancient tombs. When the catacombs were completed, some of the ancient corpses were relocated there. Within a few weeks, it became overrun with mushrooms and sealed off.”

The Beyonder powers brought about by the seal’s formal formation combined with the problem of certain ancient corpses created such a Crazy Mushroom Cave? Lumian analyzed the reason thoughtfully.

Observing Muggle’s attentive silence, 007 nodded courteously and turned to head towards the Sanctuary team.

Franca couldn’t help but chuckle.

“He’s so polite to you. If only he knew that most of his troubles and fatigue stemmed from you, his expression would be quite the sight.”

Lumian chuckled in response.

“But the Mirror People situation has nothing to do with me.”

As they conversed, they strolled toward the corner where the Academy team congregated.

Midway, Lumian suddenly turned to Franca.

“Do you think any member of the Research Society, especially those in Trier, might have been replaced by the Mirror People?”

“That’s impossible… Don’t scare me!” Franca sounded alarmed.

Lumian fought the urge to pout, not wanting to destroy his sister’s beautiful image.

“What’s impossible? Any Trier citizen could be replaced by the Mirror People, even if they’re part of a secret organization.

“Moreover, most in the Research Society are Beyonders with a strong spirit of exploration. Their encounters with Beyonder incidents are more frequent than regular folks.”

Franca nodded seriously, acknowledging the potential risk couldn’t be disregarded.

“As a Review Committee member, you should liaise with Madame Hela and the others, observe discreetly,” Lumian reminded her.

There lingered uncertainty about whether the Mirror People of transmigrators retained their pre-transmigration memories. If they did, they could bypass the Committee’s safeguards easily. Their interactions within the Research Society could go undetected unless they caused harm, staying concealed.

“Understood,” Franca responded with solemnity.

At that moment, many familiar members of Lumian’s team gathered in the corner, including Professor, Associate Professor, Headmaster, Periodic Table, Bear, Griffin, and Isotope.

Some wore different disguises than before, though Lumian had grown accustomed to their diverse outfits. They were individuals who wouldn’t attend a masquerade ball in the same attire twice. Regardless, their general body shape, language, and chest labels helped others accurately identify them.

After exchanging greetings, Lumian and Franca each took a seat.

After a few minutes, Franca raised her hand and said, “Is anyone selling Language Comprehension-type items? I know someone who’s going overseas and wants to acquire some.”

Upon hearing her request, some chuckled, while others pursed their lips. The former wanted to inquire if her friend was herself, while the latter recalled the key member of April Fool’s who had caused numerous catastrophes in the Research Society.

Bear, encased in a brown bear hide, spoke in ancient Feysac in a muffled voice, “I have a Language Comprehension charm that achieves a similar effect.”

“Language Comprehension charm?” Franca asked with interest.

Having been fluent in ancient Feysac for many years, she had become relatively proficient in Loen, Highlander, and other languages of the Northern Continent. However, she lacked knowledge of the Southern Continent’s languages.

The Academy team member with the code name “Bear” glanced at Hidden Blade with his coffee-colored eyes.

“Yes, its essence is to temporarily strengthen and alter the Body of Heart and Mind, improving understanding, reasoning, and communication. It also imparts a portion of the corresponding language’s knowledge. Using one lasts seven days.

“Currently, Language Comprehension charms are divided into three types. The lowest level is for all ancient Feysacian languages. Creating them is the least difficult. You only need…”

Bear paused, making a conversion based on the current exchange rate.

“A thousand verl d’or.

“The middle level covers all ordinary languages. It costs 2,000 verl d’or. At the highest level, you can temporarily master a designated supernatural language. 5,000 verl d’or. Hidden Blade, which one do you want?”

Franca listened attentively, sensing a subtle expression of pity and regret in Bear’s gaze.

Is he pitying me for daring to drink the Witch potion back then? Franca wondered silently. Without looking at Muggle, she made the decision.

“Three lowest-level Language Comprehension charms, one mid-level. Uh, can I get a discount?”

She believed Lumian would eventually track down Hisoka in the Southern Continent. It was better to prepare a Mid-level Language Comprehension charm

now.

“No.” Bear shook his head.

“Alright,” Franca said, lacking talent for bargaining. She habitually asked for a discount to avoid potential future regret.

After Franca paid and settled on the delivery method, Professor, adorned with a black butterfly mask, surveyed the area. After a moment of contemplation, she spoke up.

“Associate Professor, I and a few Warlocks I know have been having strange dreams lately. In these dreams, there’s a wilderness with many indistinct figures wandering around.”

“Have any of you had one too?”

She directed her inquiry towards the other Warlocks in the Academy team.

Wilderness… Wandering figures… Could this be related to some Madame’s Paramita? Lumian, concealed behind a silver-white half-mask, furrowed his brow slightly. It seemed unlikely that a Warlock would dream of Paramita. Why would they?

Observing other Warlocks expressing that they had similar dreams, but the frequency and clarity decreased over time, Lumian, acting as Aurore, nodded and posed a question instead of providing an answer.

“When did you guys start having this dream?”

Could it be an abnormality caused by the Hidden Sage?

Professor had clearly made confirmation on this matter.

“The two of us and some friends started after the night of the terrifying storm in Trier—last month.”

She knew that Muggle was also in Trier and knew the exact night she referred to.

The sudden, terrifying downpour occurred the night the Hostel ritual was activated… Could it be influenced by the leaked power of the seal? Is there a high-level power of the Mystery Pryer pathway sealed inside? Or were the fallen monks of the Deep Valley Cloister connected to the Hidden Sage? Did this evil god secretly do something that left some power in the real world? Lumian pondered and then said, “I heard something happened to Trier’s Deep Valley Cloister that night, and the Savant pathway and the Mystery Pryer pathway are neighboring pathways.”

Professor, Associate Professor, and the others turned their gaze to Muggle. They hadn’t expected their companion, who had recently moved to Trier, to possess such secretive knowledge about the local area.

Lumian continued slowly, “Shouldn’t we inquire with people from the Savant pathway and see if they had similar dreams?”

Good idea! Franca silently praised.

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Chapter 544 - 544 Threat

544 Threat

Dressed in a doctor's white coat with a saucepan over his head, Stonemason's azure eyes focused on the Academy Warlocks through two specially dug holes.

He nodded and said, "Recently, I've also been having strange dreams related to a wilderness. However, in addition to the endless wilderness and wandering figures, there are also some peculiar scenes in my dreams."

As expected, it affects the neighboring pathways of Mystery Pryer and Savant… Lumian nodded slightly as Professor pressed further, "What scenes are they?"

Stonemason's voice echoed within the saucepan.

"I see scenes of primitive humans independently creating fire for the first time. Ancient humans making sacrifices to the sky and land. There were many similar scenes, but they were very vague. I was in a dream and couldn't scrutinize them carefully. I can't remember the exact situations clearly.

"According to the Savant pathway's Beyonders, this is a fragment of civilization."

Upon hearing Stonemason's response, Lumian's forehead twitched imperceptibly.

It reminded him of the moment he heard a peculiar sound accompanying scenes while wearing the Mystery Prying Eye in Fourth Epoch Trier!

As the scenes unfolded, a chorus of voices echoed one name: Celestial Master!

Was what I received a fragment of a civilization? The Eye of Truth correspond to the Mystery Pryer pathway. Upon their use, they activated the powers of neighboring pathways, revealing corresponding sounds? But there is a prerequisite, a special environment… Fourth Epoch Trier holds remnants of advanced powers from the Mystery Pryer and Savant pathways. Celestial Master —the term is similar to the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings which influences Seer, Apprentice, and Marauder pathways. Meanwhile, Celestial Master correlates with the Mystery Pryer and Savant pathways. Lumian fell into deep thought after his initial shock.

Franca glanced at him, perplexed by his limited participation in the discussion.

After a moment, Lumian snapped out of his daze. Considering Professor, Stonemason, and others' speculations, he carefully stated, "The sudden downpour in Trier is an outward manifestation of a catastrophe, much like the Deep Valley

Cloister.

“I suspect that a high-level power leaked during the catastrophe, affecting Beyonders from two neighboring pathways. The impact is more pronounced for those in Trier but relatively minor for those outside.”

At this point, Lumian smirked.

“I’ve observed that Warlocks outside Trier experienced significant decreases in the frequency and clarity of their wilderness dreams. Strangely, none of the Warlocks in Trier mentioned this.”

Bear in a brown bear skin suit nodded approvingly.

Professor and others concurred with Lumian’s hypothesis, relieved that the situation was indeed improving.

They couldn’t help but marvel at Muggle’s remarkable growth after surviving the April Fool’s trap.

Franca then inquired about the owner of the ancient tomb beside the Crazy Mushroom Cave in Trier’s catacombs.

Franca had already entrusted this matter to 007. Her current focus was on uncovering any Mirror People who might have infiltrated the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, thanks to Lumian’s teachings.

After discussing the Mirror People situation with Hela, Lumian emerged from the corner where the Academy team was located, ready to gather mysticism knowledge from the death domain with the Purgatory team.

Franca immediately approached Lumian, lowered her voice, and asked with a smile, “What were you thinking when Stonemason recounted his dream? It seemed like you had thought of something important.”

Hadn’t I shared what I saw and heard after using the Eye of Truth underground? That shouldn’t be the case. I won’t forget sharing matters involving the Celestial Master with Franca… Lumian’s heart suddenly stirred, feeling that his spirituality was hindering this matter.

After a moment of contemplation, he responded, “It’s rather complicated and involves high-level powers. I’ll write to Madam Magician later and see if I can share it with you.”

“Alright,” Franca said eagerly. “Don’t forget!”

Her curiosity was piqued.

At that moment, Hela, still dressed as a black widow, approached Lumian and asked, “Any progress in tracking Ultraman and Bard?”

“Not at the moment. I’m still compiling the necessary information,” Lumian replied truthfully.

Hela nodded slightly and replied, “If you need assistance, don’t hesitate to reach out to me or Gandalf.”

The primary objective for most members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society was to eliminate the April Fool’s traitors.

“Got it.” Lumian had no plans to confront the key members of April Fool’s on his own.

Undoubtedly, it was optimal for him to carry out the final execution.

…

Upon returning to the real world, Lumian noticed that night was falling. He set out a stack of late-night snacks for Ludwig and summoned Madam Magician’s messenger. After freshening up—washing his face, brushing his teeth, and snuffing out the wall lamp—he settled into bed.

Just then, a sense of alertness surged through him. He sat up suddenly, focusing on a specific spot in the room.

Outside the window, a faint crimson glow shimmered. In one corner, a shadow swiftly expanded, reaching up to the ceiling, forming a silhouette resembling two goat horns.

It was as if a devil had emerged from the dark abyss.

Lumian’s eyebrows twitched as he stared at the colossal black shadow.

The devil-like shadow resonated with a deep and imposing voice.

“Lowly human, you must answer my question truthfully.”

It spoke in Intisian.

Lumian cracked his neck gently and asked, “What’s the question?”

The devilish figure rumbled in a deep tone, “What did the Paco family’s Giorgia hire you to do?”

“What do human affairs have to do with a devil like you? I’m a professional adventurer. I won’t betray my employer.”

The devilish shadow growled, “Then I’ll use your blood as the answer!”

Before it completed its sentence, its aura surged, and the crimson moonlight in the room instantly succumbed to darkness, shrouding the space in a chilling aura.

The corners of Lumian's mouth curled up. With a swift press of his left hand, he catapulted from the bed like a cheetah, propelling himself towards the ceiling.

Overhead, darkness enveloped him, resembling an abyssal reflection.

In a sudden twist, Lumian's body turned pitch black, almost zero in thickness.

He morphed into a shadow creature and seamlessly melded into the darkness!

Within the dimly illuminated fishnet of shadows, Lumian spotted the "devil."

Standing just over a meter tall, the creature was child-sized, yet its skin was creased like that of an elderly man in his seventies or eighties.

Its disproportionately large head featured protruding eyes, presenting a grotesque visage that was beyond Lumian's knowledge of creatures.

In the form of a shadow, Lumian "swam" toward it, aiming to ensnare the peculiar creature that manifested the devil's projection. He planned on pulling it out of the darkness and controlling it with the Spell of Harrumph.

Many of Lumian's abilities were constrained in the shadow creature form.

The short, malevolent creature with wrinkled skin appeared defenseless against the shadow's entanglement, surprising Lumian, who had anticipated fierce resistance.

Without hesitation, he prepared to depart, leaving the shadow to detain its captive.

Just then, the darkness surrounding him brightened, illuminated by the light from the "sky."

Instinctively, Lumian looked up and witnessed the pure darkness rapidly dissolving, unveiling a colossal star hanging in the void.

The star bore a faint blue hue, resembling a demonic eye.

In an instant, Lumian felt his blood freeze, involuntarily snapping out of his shadow creature form. The big-headed "shorty," adorned with wrinkles, seized the chance to break free from its constraints, swiftly merging into the pale-blue starlight and disappearing from sight.

After a moment, Lumian fully recovered. He stared at the now-normal room, sinking into contemplation.

What in the world was that thing? It seemed so weak, yet it came to intimidate me!

Nevertheless, the blinking star held an air of peculiarity.

Why not just send the star to frighten me right away? After suppressing me, it didn't seize the opportunity to attack. Even though I regained some mobility upon

escaping the shadows, I was still relatively slow… Lumian mused silently.

While he couldn't grasp the full picture, certain details became apparent.

No wonder Giorgia didn't casually enlist a foreign adventurer with Beyonder powers to handle the humanoid lizard. Someone lurking in the shadows would interrogate me about the entire matter in the future. Only a renowned adventurer like Louis Berry, capable of hunting Demon Warlocks, can resist it.

Heh heh, earning 15,000 risot isn't a walk in the park…

The one in the shadows knows Louis Berry isn't weak, so they didn't dare to attack directly. Instead, they dispatched a small monster with unique abilities to intimidate me, hoping to extract information?

Why not go to Giorgia's house and ask? Their family doesn't seem to possess any superpowers…

Is this an internal conflict within the Fisheries Company and the Fisheries Guild?

Yes, it's an opportunity to interact more deeply with the Paco family and understand the core process of the sea prayer ritual…

Shaking his head, Lumian reclined on the bed and resumed his slumber.

Around 8 a.m. the next day, Lugano, who had gone out to buy breakfast, rushed back and said to Lumian, "Boss, those combat nuns are looking for you!"

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Chapter 545 - 545 Order

545 Order

In any country on the Northern Continent, wild Beyonders were unwelcome. They faced control and even apprehension. This wasn't like colonies such as Port Farim, where renowned adventurers could freely roam the streets and boast about their experiences without the concern of official Beyonders knocking on their doors.

"Boss, is there any danger?" Lugano nervously inquired, his perpetual fear evident as a wild Beyonder.

Lumian chuckled, responding confidently, "That depends on their attitude."

The implication was that the nuns were the ones facing danger.

Lumian teased, "Aren't you excited about the combat nuns? Shouldn't you be thrilled that they're here?"

Imagination isn't the same as reality… Seeing his boss showing no intention of "teleporting" away with him, Lugano nervously descended and extended an invitation to the combat nuns.

The leader was the same one Lumian had encountered before.

Most of her naturally curly, thick black hair was neatly tucked into a black hat with white patterns. Her bright and lively light-blue eyes, along with her thick eyebrows, bestowed upon her a unique and captivating charm.

The woman in leather armor gazed at Lumian and inquired gently, "Are you the adventurer Louis Berry?"

Lumian nodded. "Who might you be?"

The strikingly beautiful combat nun replied with a smile, "I'm Sister Noelia of the Fertility Order, in charge of a combat team.

"Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!"

Noelia raised her hands to the sky, her feet slightly apart.

Observing that Noelia and the other combat nuns of the Fertility Order were not as judgmental as he expected, not viewing wild Beyonders as inherently evil creatures, Lumian smiled.

“Madame, what brings you here?”

Noelia smiled and explained, “You’re a great adventurer who hunted Demon Warlock. If we hadn’t known you were in Port Santa, we might not have bothered. However, now that we are aware, we must come and speak with you, reminding you to abide by the corresponding order.”

“What order?” Lumian inquired, anticipating the answer while holding the golden straw hat.

The demeanor of these combat nuns made him wonder if they were official Beyonders. They didn’t directly arrest him, nor did they use stern warnings.

Is this the distinction between the Church of Earth Mother and other Churches? Emphasizing motherhood and respecting life?

“However, this is Port Santa, and many sea merchants here have a genuine need to resist pirates and protect their goods. We lack the manpower to safeguard them all, so we’ve tacitly agreed to allow them to hire Beyonder bodyguards.

“Firstly, you cannot venture inland without our permission. To reach other cities, you need our approval. Secondly, you cannot perform any rituals in Port Santa, consume potions for advancement, or engage in mysticism experiments. Thirdly, you must refrain from using your abilities to cause chaos or catastrophe.

“Of course, if you return to Port Santa in the future, you’ll need to register with us first.”

It’s a reasonable request, and coming from the ruling Church, it’s not excessive at all… It’s even simpler and easier than obtaining a firearm permit in Port Farim or other places. Of course, not applying for identification in Port Farim isn’t a big deal. No one will report it, and there won’t be any issues if you don’t directly encounter the officials… Lumian nodded gently and replied,

“Sure thing.”

At this moment, Lumian’s thoughts raced, and he couldn’t help but chuckle.

“But Port Santa isn’t entirely safe. I encountered a monster last night…”

He briefly recounted how the little monster had disguised itself as a devil to intimidate him. While he didn’t conceal that he had accepted Giorgia’s commission, he refrained from specifying the details.

Noelia listened attentively and responded without surprise, “We’ll handle it. Try not to get involved in the Fisheries Guild’s matters in the future. Their internal issues will be resolved internally.”

Does this mean that the Earth Mother Church refrains from interfering with the internal strife of the Fisheries Guild, allowing them complete autonomy? Lumian

smiled and said,

“I’ll do my best to avoid participation, but I’ll reserve the right to defend myself and counterattack.”

Noelia didn’t offer any further comments. Her smile faded as she led the combat nuns to the door.

In just two or three steps, she smoothly drew a straight sword from her back, half-turned, and slashed at Lumian.

The series of movements flowed seamlessly, occurring in the blink of an eye.

Lumian stared at the sword beam, neither dodging nor raising his hand to block.

With a swoosh, the straight sword grazed the tip of his nose and pointed to the ground.

Noelia smiled radiantly and nodded in satisfaction.

“As expected of a great adventurer. Your foresight, judgment, and courage are exceptional.”

She then turned around and addressed the combat nuns who followed her.

“This is a true man. Those who only know how to flaunt their muscles and swing their swords can only be called male beasts.”

As they spoke, the combat nuns exited Lumian’s rented suite.

Lumian raised his right hand and stroked his chin, feeling a strange sensation.

The sight of women openly scrutinizing men made him uncomfortable.

After watching Noelia and the nuns leave, Lugano lowered his voice and asked, “Boss, did a little monster really come to warn you last night?”

Lugano was taken aback for a moment before understanding Lumian’s intentions. He grabbed Ludwig and followed closely behind.

…

21 Saint Lana Street, in the activity room of a suite on the fifth floor.

Lumian encountered Giorgia once again.

Dressed in a vibrant dress adorned with intricate patterns, the lady glanced at the boy, whose appetite exceeded her imagination, before turning her gaze to the adventurer, Louis Berry.

“What brings you here?”

Lugano translated professionally.

“Last night, a monster came to intimidate me, but I chased it away.” Lumian briefly recounted the monster’s appearance and behavior.

Upon hearing Lugano’s account, Giorgia displayed no obvious surprise. After a few seconds of contemplation, she said, “Wait a moment.”

Leaving the maid and valet behind, she disappeared into an inner room.

After a few minutes, she reappeared, arm in arm with a man.

The man seemed to be in his forties, tall and gaunt, his eyes a nearly translucent blue. His grayish-black, slightly curly hair cascaded over his shoulders like an artist’s. His appearance couldn’t be described as particularly good or bad, yet he possessed an unforgettable quality.

“This is my husband, Rubió Paco,” Giorgia introduced.

The shareholder of the Fisheries Company and a committee member of the Fisheries Guild? Lumian had gathered information about the Paco family through Lugano over the past two days.

Rubió’s father had initially been a prosperous fisherman who shared a boat with others. After marrying Martha, who had once been a Maiden of the Sea, he gradually established himself. Not only did he manage the Fisheries Company for a time, but he also ascended to become a committee member of the oldest local guild, the Fisheries Guild.

Shortly after the sea prayer ritual last year, the old gentleman passed away. With strong support from Matriarch Marta, Rubió inherited his father’s status and became the youngest committee member of the Fisheries Guild.

However, he no longer held a specific position at Port Santa Fisheries Company. He only held onto the shareholders’ voting rights and dividends.

This middle-aged man had once been rebellious. He was expected to comply with his parents’ arrangements and marry a Maiden of the Sea. However, he remained single until his early thirties and then married Giorgia, the daughter of a textile merchant. If it were any other prominent family, the matriarch would have surely intervened and perhaps even banished Rubió. Yet, Martha indulged him and eventually chose to compromise.

Before Lugano could commence with the translation, Rubió spoke in less fluent Intisian, “We can communicate directly. When I was young, I often took a boat out to sea and visited places like Port Farim.”

“Monsieur Rubió, I don’t think there’s a need for communication, and I don’t intend to find out why the monster came looking for me. I’m just here to inform you about this.” Lumian glanced at the puzzled Giorgia and suspected that Rubió

had switched to Intisian not out of politeness but to keep his wife in the dark about something.

Rubió nodded gently and said, “I understand your concerns. I merely wish to entrust you with another mission.”

“What mission?” Lumian asked with a smile.

Rubió calmly replied, “My mother, Martha, hails from Milo Village. Recently, she wishes to return and meet the current Governor of the Sea to request his permission to seek treatment at the Church of Earth Mother. Yes, my mother hasn’t been in good health recently. She can’t get out of bed.”

Martha is still alive? Lumian was slightly surprised.

Experienced as he was, he deduced that the monster might have been transformed by Martha, based on the absence of the matriarch, the Paco family’s reluctance to expose the humanoid lizard, and the fact that she was once a Maiden of the Sea!

The sea prayer ritual wasn’t just an honor for the Maidens of the Sea. Perhaps there was also hidden corruption that might erupt at some point in time.

But now, from what Rubió had said, Martha was still alive. Previously, she had only been seriously ill.

Where did that humanoid lizard come from? Lumian suppressed his puzzlement and asked in confusion, “Why does Madame Martha need the Governor of the Sea’s permission to seek treatment?”

Rubió’s expression shifted, a mix of disgust and resistance evident in his words.

“All Maidens of the Sea have to follow the orders of the Governor of the Sea when dealing with Church-related matters. Failing to do so would be blasphemous to the sea prayer ritual.”

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Chapter 546 - 546 Monitor

546 Monitor

546 Monitor

“What might that be?” Rubió asked cautiously.

A cunning smile formed on Lumian’s lips.

“I’m here to witness the sea prayer ritual, but I’ve heard only a select few can observe its core segments. I seek such an opportunity.”

Rubió remained silent for a prolonged moment.

Giorgia, unable to contain her curiosity, questioned her husband in Highlander about the conversation and his concerns.

Lugano seized the chance to approach Lumian and translated the couple’s exchange.

Lumian’s eyebrows twitched imperceptibly upon hearing they were genuinely considering allowing him to pose as a sailor and board the special sacrificial ship.

Is Rubió Paco truly considering my request?

I’m merely offering an outrageous deal to test if I can glean details about the sea prayer ritual. I don’t intend to leverage this seemingly straightforward task to gain access to the last two segments of the ritual!

It remained a secret harbored by the Fisheries Guild for over a millennium, the wellspring of their power and prestige!

As these thoughts raced through Lumian’s mind, he strongly suspected that the commission to send Madame Martha to Milo Village to meet the current Governor of the Sea carried a high risk. It wasn’t a task for any random Beyonder. Therefore, Rubió Paco was reluctant to let go of Louis Berry, the proven adventurer.

But where could the danger lie? This is Port Santa, not the islands on the sea or the remote towns of the Southern Continent. Which Beyonder would dare to attack me on the streets in broad daylight? Aren’t they afraid of being captured by the combat nuns and turned into fertilizer for the land? One can’t underestimate the power of an orthodox Church!

Unless someone possesses a special ability, like Loki's, to kill me undetected on the bustling streets, or if a Saint with godhood personally takes action, aiming to end the battle before the Church of Earth Mother reacts… But it can't be that exaggerated. It's such a trivial matter… As Lumian pondered, Rubió and Giorgia reached a conclusion.

The former said to Lumian, "I cannot permit your participation in the last two segments of the sea prayer ritual. It is a blasphemy against the sea. Those involved will face expulsion from Port Santa, including their family.

"However, I am willing to allow you to conceal yourself in Milo Village in advance and witness the ancient performances during the vigil ritual."

So, I can't directly witness the vigil ritual, but I can partake in the accompanying folklore performance? Did Ultraman, Bard, and Mad Lady use a similar method to approach the core of the sea prayer ritual and complete the most crucial part of the prank? Lumian noticed that Rubió had already made a significant concession and no longer insisted. He smiled and replied, "Deal."

Without waiting for a response, he "kindly" suggested, "Let's send Madame Martha to Milo Village today, shall we? We mustn't delay when it comes to illnesses. Get her treatment as soon as possible."

Rubió hesitated for a moment before saying, "My mother is already asleep. She's been resting a lot lately. Forcing her awake will impact her body and mind. How about tomorrow morning?"

Is some advanced preparation needed? Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

He cast a quick glance at Lugano, and his heart skipped a beat.

Lumian emphasized the word "doctor."

Without hesitation, Rubió Paco shook his head and said, "We trust the Church's doctors more. My mother is my most important family. I don't want her to take any unnecessary risks."

What he implied was that he couldn't vouch for the medical skills of the interpreter. He couldn't use the Paco family's matriarch as an experiment.

Lumian was actually looking forward to sending Madame Martha to Milo Village because it meant he might meet the current Governor of the Sea and have a chance to learn something. He had only suggested that Lugano treat the matriarch to test Rubió.

The result of the probe revealed many hidden secrets in this matter!

Having agreed to escort Madame Martha and her maid to the Governor of the Sea at 9 a.m. the following day, Lumian led Ludwig and Lugano out of the main house at 21 Saint Lana Street. Giorgia walked them all the way to the door.

Lumian nonchalantly remarked, “Does the Governor of the Sea have to reside in Milo Village?”

With Lugano’s translation, Giorgia nodded slightly and said, “The Governor of the Sea resides in the building where the vigil ritual is held every night. He can move freely during the day, but he can’t leave Port Santa.”

The building where the vigil ritual is held? The essence of the vigil ritual is to allow a quasi-Governor of the Sea to enter the residence and replace the former Governor of the Sea, waiting to be officially appointed by the sea the next day? Lumian speculated, combining his mysticism knowledge.

He smiled and asked, “What are the perks of being Governor of the Sea?”

After hearing the translation, Giorgia fell silent for a few seconds before saying, “Among the fishmongers, the merchants, he’s already the true governor in their eyes.”

It wasn’t an answer, just a whisper of truth.

Lumian nodded without pressing further. He led Ludwig and Lugano through the iron gates.

After taking a few steps along the verdant path in the forest, he suddenly looked up.

On a branch stood a gray-feathered myna.

Lumian gave it a cursory glance and continued on, his steps brisk towards the waiting carriage.

After a while, the myna flapped its wings and flew up. After circling a few times, it circled a house two streets away before dipping down towards an open window.

It landed on a middle-aged man’s forearm and spoke in precise Highlander, “Louis Berry is back at the Paco house! He stayed nearly half an hour!”

The middle-aged man, dressed in gray clothes with disheveled brown hair, resembling a suburban farmer, fed the myna a few self-made rice grains and said, “Observe further and see if Rubió Paco and Giorgia will go out today.”

After the myna flew out of the window, the middle-aged man exhaled and turned around.

Suddenly, his eyes froze as he saw someone sitting in the only armchair!

The man had black hair and green eyes, wearing a white shirt, a black vest, dark pants, and a golden straw hat.

Louis Berry!

The middle-aged man's back arched slightly, and his feet parted slightly, but he took no further action.

Lumian leaned back in his chair and engaged in casual conversation in Intisian, as if he had been expected.

"What did you have your bird spy on?"

The middle-aged man fell silent for a moment before speaking in somewhat awkward Intisian, "Watch if anyone enters or exits Paco's house, and see if there's anything unusual there."

"Very honest." Lumian nodded approvingly. "Who asked you to do it?"

He was pleased that the other party knew some Intisian. Otherwise, he could only rely on key words to communicate or capture him to have Lugano translate.

"Juan Oro," the middle-aged man replied without hesitation.

Juan Oro… The president of the Fisheries Guild and the former village chief of Milo Village? Lumian smiled and said, "I'm surprised you're so forthright."

The middle-aged man forced a smile and said, "I don't think I'm stronger than Demon Warlock and can defeat you."

"That's right. Those who understand the situation and themselves can live longer." Lumian crossed his right foot over his left leg. "Why is Juan Oro monitoring the Paco family?"

"I don't know, and there's no need for me to know. I'll receive a reward as long as I pass on what I see," the middle-aged man replied sincerely.

Lumian gazed at him for a few seconds before saying, "Did you send that little monster last night?"

The middle-aged man was taken aback.

"What little monster? What happened last night?"

Lumian chuckled and stood up without explaining.

"What's your name?" he asked as he walked towards the door.

The middle-aged man hesitated for a moment before answering truthfully, "Sanches."

Lumian opened the door, walked out, and disappeared from Sanches's sight.

…

Upon his return to Solow Motel, Lumian noticed a folded letter resting on the master bedroom's desk.

Skillfully unfurling it, he found the distinct handwriting of Madam Magician.

"You can share those matters with the Two of Cups, but avoid delving into excessive detail.

"I refrained from elaborating on the voices you heard and the fragments of civilization you glimpsed earlier as they remain too advanced for your understanding. Simply remember not to heed random sounds or sights in an ancient ruin like Fourth Epoch Trier. Also, caution your Warlock associates—

it's acceptable to occasionally take in the Hidden Sage's indoctrination, but they mustn't fully believe in Him. His state is precarious."

After incinerating the letter, Lumian contemplated for a moment and decided to "teleport" back to Trier to inform Franca in person and avert any potential mishaps.

…

Trier, nestled within the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai.

As Lumian materialized, Franca and Jenna were engrossed in perusing a stack of ancient information from an unknown source.

"Hey, could you 'teleport' outside and knock? It's quite startling when you suddenly appear like that!" Franca nearly tensed the formless spider silk she'd permanently set up in the room.

Lumian chuckled and remarked, "With a Witch's spiritual perception, what's the difference between me 'teleporting' outside the door and appearing in the living room?"

"Why the sudden return?" Franca paused before asking, "Madame Magician said you could share about that matter?"

"What's going on?" Jenna queried, looking puzzled.

She stood up and prepared to leave.

"Yes," Lumian replied to Franca's question, but he made no attempt to stop Jenna from leaving.

Nor did Franca intervene.

Once Jenna had retreated to her bedroom, Lumian turned to Franca and disclosed, "When they discussed the wilderness dream, it made me recall the voices and

visions I encountered in Fourth Epoch Trier. They’re connected to the Celestial Master!”

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Chapter 547 - 547 Source of Familiarity

547 Source of Familiarity

547 Source of Familiarity

Confusion enveloped her.

“In the Fourth Epoch Trier, what did you see or hear that we didn’t?”

Everyone had been together unless it was before they met, but Jenna should have been aware!

Without pausing for Lumian’s response, Franca contemplated for a moment and suggested, “Could it be the aftereffects of using the Eye of Truth?”

She recalled Lumian’s abnormal behavior during that time.

“Yes, that’s right.” Lumian nodded, pulled up a chair, and settled down. He described the collision of two rocks, sparks flying, and the ensuing blaze that engulfed dry leaves and withered branches, amid echoing voices chanting “Celestial Master.”

The more Franca listened, the more her focus intensified. Uncharacteristically, she refrained from interrupting.

As she listened, her gaze gradually shifted, seemingly lost in reminiscence and distant thought.

Once Lumian finished recounting, Franca remained motionless for what felt like an eternity, frozen like a mechanical doll paused mid-action.

After several seconds, she abruptly straightened up, pinched her nose, and forced a smile.

“As anticipated, the Celestial Master is part of our world.

“The fragments of civilization you received bear a striking resemblance to some aspects of my country’s history, yet there are differences… Could it be the true history concealed beneath the surface?

“The Celestial Master is attempting to interfere and breach into this world, wielding significant influence over the Mystery Pryer and Savant pathways, much

like the way the Celestial Worthy affects Seers, Apprentices, and Marauders?

“Could the depravity among some of the monks in the Deep Valley Cloister and the peculiar state of the Hidden Sage be linked to the Celestial Master?”

Franca’s thoughts crystallized as she spoke, her eyes sparkling like a serene lake.

“That’s my hunch too,” Lumian concurred with Franca.

Franca rose and paced, seemingly alone, contemplating how to follow this trail and unveil the truth behind the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society’s transmigration.

After a few minutes, she muttered to herself, “The connection between the two worlds is stronger than I expected. It’s not just through the River Styx…

“We should still be able to find many traces of the interaction between the two worlds…”

“When we grow stronger and amass enough gold, I want you to summon Chen Tu again, the Armored Shadow. He should possess some insight into the Celestial Master.”

Franca lapsed into silence once more, her mind retracing an unknown memory.

A few moments later, she produced four brass metal plates and handed them to Lumian.

“The Language Comprehension charms you wanted. The one with the most intricate patterns allows you to understand the languages of the Southern Continent. The others are for the ancient Feysac language family. The activation incantation is the word ‘knowledge’ in ancient Hermes.”

She and the Bear had completed the delivery through Madame Hela’s messenger. The other party proved quite efficient.

After Lumian handed Franca the money, he “teleported” out of Trier and back to Port Santa.

In the hushed aftermath, Jenna cautiously opened the bedroom door and stuck her head out.

“Has Lumian left?”

“Yes,” Franca replied, her emotions subdued.

Jenna glanced at her but didn’t press for more information. Instead, she redirected the conversation to the stack of information related to the underground tomb.

Late at night.

Franca returned to her room.

Glancing at the small analyzer, the accompanying typewriter, and the radio transceiver, she didn't sit down to chat as usual. Instead, she climbed into bed.

Sitting in the middle of the bed, leaning against the pillow, hugging her legs and curling up, Franca's gaze unfocused on the crimson moon and stars outside the window.

Lumian's words today plunged her into nostalgia, but the more her emotions fluctuated, the less she wanted to reveal vulnerability. She endured it, pretending to have recovered.

Only when solitude enveloped her, as the night fell silent and the seemingly eternal stars adorned the sky, did she shed her thick "armor" and sink deep into her emotions.

After an indeterminate amount of time, Franca lowered her head, burying her face between her knees.

That night, she delved into a multitude of dreams. Broad shoulders carried her as a child, a touch of white hair at the temples, dishes not particularly delicious but always suited her tastes. Pure emotions of her youth, memories of being the "atmosphere livening machine," and her "broadminded" self all danced in fragmented sequences…

As her two decades unfolded in her dreams, she unknowingly opened her eyes, feeling the coldness on her face. Reluctant to move, she lingered in the moment.

Suddenly, a recollection struck her.

Back on the fourth level of the catacombs, she and Jenna had encountered a man who seemed strangely familiar.

Initially, she believed that the original owner of her body had encountered him. Now, the reason for his familiarity became clear.

The man bore an uncanny resemblance to someone from her home country before transmigration!

Despite altering his appearance to thwart immediate recognition, Franca was now certain that his facial features differed from those she had encountered in this world. Softer, less chiseled!

…

After breakfast, Lumian stepped into the master bedroom's washroom and retrieved a low-level Language Comprehension charm from his Traveler's Bag.

"Knowledge," he whispered in ancient Hermes.

The brass-like charm ignited with bluish-green flames and swiftly vanished.

Instantly, Lumian felt an abnormal clarity in his mind, as if an avalanche of additional knowledge had flooded in, unveiling the structural origins and connections of numerous words.

Today's agenda: a visit to the oldest fishing village, perhaps meeting the Governor of the Sea. Mastering Highlander in secret seemed imperative to avoid missing crucial clues!

The charm's effects would last for seven days.

Leaving the bedroom, Lumian took Ludwig and Lugano to 21 Saint Lana Street in a rental carriage, where they met Martha, the matriarch of the Paco family.

Martha didn't look like she was in her sixties, with only faint wrinkles at the corners of her eyes, appearing more in her early fifties based on her eyes, nose, mouth, and brows. Her features retained a unique charm.

At that moment, the old lady with grayish-black hair and light-blue eyes wore a black, widow-like dress and a dark, old-styled bonnet. Pale-faced, she was supported by two young maids as they boarded a four-wheeled, four-

seater carriage.

"Monsieur Berry, I'll be relying on you," Rubió Paco nodded at Lumian beside the carriage.

He was to accompany his mother to Milo Village to meet the Governor of the Sea.

Lumian directed Ludwig to Giorgia.

"Please keep an eye on him until I return from Milo Village."

Rubió translated this time.

Giorgia smiled and replied, "Don't worry, I'll make sure there's plenty of food."

She had already realized that this boy had the appetite of two or three adults, but as the godson of a great adventurer, it was understandable that he was special.

Lumian wasn't concerned about Ludwig's treatment in the Paco household. He feigned his understanding of Highlander and waited for Lugano's translation before saying, "A meal every two hours."

With that, he sat on the right side of the carriage driver and didn't enter the carriage. Seeing this, Lugano had no choice but to choose the seat to the left of the carriage driver.

Before doing so, he diligently translated Lumian's final instructions.

Although he didn't know what would happen if Ludwig starved, he felt that it wouldn't be good, so he emphasized it twice.

As the carriage set off, Giorgia processed the translation.

"A meal every two hours? Two hours?"

The Paco family's carriage rolled along the grayish-white stone-paved street. Lumian leaned against the carriage wall, retracted his right leg, and stepped on the edge of the carriage driver's seat.

Lugano glanced at him, feeling a bit uneasy.

A seasoned bounty hunter, Lugano sensed something awry in this seemingly ordinary mission that prompted Rubió to assist his employer in hiding in Milo Village.

His heart raced as he observed armed pedestrians on the street, fearing an imminent attack from the crowd.

Under the October sun still blazing in Port Santa, the streets, damp from the previous night's heavy rain, hadn't completely dried. Lugano yearned to reach Milo Village quickly.

Glancing at Lumian, he noticed that Lumian had narrowed his eyes. Lowering his straw hat, Lumian seemed to be peacefully napping, showing no signs of nervousness.

Phew… With a powerhouse like him around, there shouldn't be a problem… Lugano silently reassured himself.

The carriage headed north, leaving Port Santa and reaching a village nestled against the Dariège mountain range, overlooking the azure sea.

Fishing boats set off, accompanied by the resonant singing and chirping of seabirds.

Milo Village's buildings exuded a historic feel. Brown, yellow, and beige stone-brick outer walls, blackened at the lower half, gave them character. Though the wooden components had been replaced, weeds still clung.

A small cathedral belonging to Earth Mother stood near the mountain, and facing the fishing village dock was the Governor of the Sea's residence.

The four-story building, with a white backing and gray bricks, resembled a cathedral and a sacrificial ground more than a human residence.

As they arrived safely at their destination, Lugano sighed in relief and jumped off the carriage. Two maids supported Madame Martha as they headed toward the Governor of the Sea's building, accompanied by Rubió Paco.

Suddenly, Lugano heard his employer's voice.

"Take a look at what's wrong with that old lady."

Uh… Lugano glanced at Lumian, who had appeared beside him, wearing a golden straw hat. He raised his hand and gently tapped his forehead, activating his Spirit Vision.

Observing Madame Martha's back for a few seconds after she entered the Governor of the Sea's residence, he frowned and said, "Most notably is the excessive loss of blood and weak vitality…"

Lugano hesitated before concluding, "It doesn't look like illness. It looks more like an injury."

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Chapter 548 - 548 Governor of the Sea

548 Governor of the Sea

Injured? Injured by the humanoid lizard? Lumian made a casual guess after hearing Lugano's judgment.

He stood by the carriage, his gaze naturally surveying the surroundings of the Governor of the Sea's residence.

The location was close to the fishing village's docks, with boats sailing into the sea and fishing nets secured to the reefs. Around nearby houses, women were busy processing seafood, turning them into salted fish and jerky. Children ran along various village roads, playing games.

Though different from Cordu, the essence of the scene remained similar.

In front of the Governor of the Sea's residence stretched a sizable square where Lumian and the others awaited Madame Martha, Rubió Paco, and their emergence.

Children gathered in a corner, arranging numerous shells and engaging in an acting game.

The eldest, dressed in a linen shirt, declared, "I'm the Governor of the Sea!"

"I'll be the guard!"

"I'm the mother," the other children replied.

The youngest hopped around, asking, "What about me? What about me?"

The child playing the role of the Governor of the Sea pondered for a moment and said, "You can be the Child of the Sea."

Child of the Sea? What's that? Lumian, though not looking, listened intently to the children's discussion.

These kids may not understand many terms, but their lack of confidentiality made them unwitting carriers of information. The adults in Milo Village wouldn't be overly vigilant against such young children, who might inadvertently reveal details remembered in their daily games.

Recalling his experiences in Cordu, Lumian recognized the value of sounding out children and playing games with them. It was a subtle way to glean insights into family matters.

After absorbing the children's discussions and gauging the time, Lumian adjusted his golden straw hat and headed straight for the Governor of the Sea's residence.

Lugano was taken aback and swiftly followed Lumian.

Two "guards" in brownish-green shirts and pants, each armed with a rifle, blocked the entrance of the cathedral and sacrificial ground, fixing their gaze on Lumian.

"Halt!" the "guards" shouted.

Undeterred, Lumian continued forward, speaking in Intisian nonchalantly, "I don't understand what you're saying."

With a swoosh, the two "guards" raised their rifles, aiming at the outsider in the golden straw hat.

Lugano hurriedly translated, "They won't let you in."

Ignoring his guide, Lumian neither sped up nor slowed down as he approached the white building with gray bricks.

A cold glint flickered in the blue eyes of the two "guards" as they squeezed their triggers.

At that moment, the outsider in the golden straw hat vanished from their sight.

He melded into the sunlit shadows of the governor's residence.

In the next instant, Lumian reappeared from a shadow in the foyer behind them and continued walking.

It was as if the distance between them had been erased.

The two "guards," with keen senses, quickly turned around, peering behind them. However, Lumian had already entered the building, leaving the foyer.

Outside, Lugano stood in a daze, uncertain whether to take the risk of following and acting as a translator or to prioritize his own safety.

After passing through the foyer, Lumian suddenly noticed the space ahead darkening. The dome, just over ten meters tall, emanated an inaccessible aura. Aqua-blue walls adorned with various reliefs caught his eye. Unlike the typical statues of Angels and Saints, these depicted objects from the sea—

starfish, corals, numerous fish, lobsters, and crabs.

Simultaneously, Lumian sensed the reliefs coming to life, casting a dangerous gaze at him.

No, they weren't alive. The building itself seemed alive, instinctively rejecting intruders and exerting layers of pressure.

Lumian's steps instantly became heavy, as if burdened by hundreds of kilograms of food.

Within his field of vision, Martha, the Paco family's matriarch, knelt diagonally on the ground with her legs crossed. Rubió Paco stood at a distance. The two maids also knelt, their backs turned towards the entrance hall, as if unwilling to look at a certain important figure.

Directly opposite the high dome lay a "carpet" made of fish skin. A young man in a retro white robe reclined on it, propping himself up with his elbows as he quietly observed Martha.

Four other beautiful women adorned the "carpet." One knelt behind the lad, serving as his cushion. Another peeled late-ripened grapes and delicately fed them to the lad. The remaining two held trays with alcohol, food, and towels, each standing in a separate spot. Their pregnant bellies were unmistakably visible, radiating a maternal glow.

Upon Lumian's sudden entrance, the lad appeared alarmed, sitting up straight and seeking solace in the embrace of the woman behind him.

Sensing the abnormality, Rubió turned around and saw the adventurer he had hired, Louis Berry.

His pupils dilated slightly as he urgently spoke in Intisian, "Why did you come in?"

Only then did Lumian pause and smile.

"I'm a professional adventurer. You've been inside for too long. I'm worried something might happen."

As he spoke, Lumian sensed dangerous gazes from various parts of the building.

Rubió fell silent for a moment before saying, "Don't worry. Just wait outside for us to come out."

"Alright," Lumian chuckled, turned around, and sauntered into the foyer, acting as if the dangerous gazes didn't exist.

Back in the foyer, he faced the two "guards" and their rifles without giving them a glance as he walked past.

The expressions of the "guards" shifted, but they refrained from firing, allowing Lumian to exit the Governor of the Sea's residence.

Lugano breathed a sigh of relief, grateful he wouldn't be hunted down by the people of Milo Village.

Despite being a Beyonder, facing more than one armed soldier still made him uneasy.

Glancing at Lumian, he hesitated to ask why his employer insisted on barging in.

Lumian settled back beside the carriage driver, tucking in his legs with one bent and the other extended, allowing his right arm to rest on it.

After nearly ten minutes, Rubió Paco and his mother, Martha, emerged from the cathedral-like building.

Rubió took a deep look at Lumian and said, "Let's go. The Governor of the Sea has agreed to let my mother receive treatment at the Church."

Is that lad the current Governor of the Sea? He looked weak and appeared panicked. How can he protect Port Santa's fishermen and sea merchants for a year? Or does he lack abilities but possess a special symbol? Did the April Fool's prank cause an accident at last year's sea prayer ritual? This Governor of the Sea might have failed to receive the sea's boon or appointment, but the Fisheries Guild members conceal the matter to avoid causing panic, treating him as the real Governor of the Sea. He must know about what happened back then… Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

He smiled and asked Rubió in Intisian, "Then, should we thank Earth Mother for Her love and care or the Governor's approval?"

Rubió didn't respond and followed his mother, Martha, into the carriage.

Lugano hurriedly took a seat on the other side of the carriage driver, watching as the horse circled around and changed direction, gradually departing from the Governor of the Sea's residence.

Phew… Lugano sighed from the bottom of his heart.

This commission doesn't seem dangerous…

Apart from his employer insisting on barging into the Governor of the Sea's residence, there were no surprises.

Lumian chuckled and remarked, "That's because I'm here. If it were just you, those hidden observers might have already come knocking."

Lugano fell silent, observing as his employer pointed at the Governor of the Sea's mansion, resembling a cathedral, and uttered a phrase in Highlander word by word.

"What. Will happen if. Blown up?"

Lugano shuddered, his hair standing on end.

He glanced at the astonished carriage driver and advised his employer in Intisian, “You’ll probably be hunted down by the entire Port Santa.”

Lumian smiled and averted his gaze, remaining silent.

Only then did Lugano realize.

His employer was testing someone!

Why else would he use Highlander, a language he hadn’t mastered yet?

He was testing the reactions of the carriage driver and Madame Martha in the carriage!

Listening to Martha and Rubió’s conversation, Lumian noted the mother and son barely spoke during the journey, perhaps due to Martha’s poor health, with occasional moans of pain.

As the carriage left Milo Village, the driver suddenly pulled the reins, stopping the horses.

An old man with a black cane had appeared in front of the carriage.

With dark and white hair, eyes as blue as the sea, and wearing common fishermen’s clothes, the wrinkled face of the old man could have killed a mosquito with its folds.

“Mr. Oro…” the carriage driver whispered, his expression tense, uncertain how to react.

Juan Oro? Lumian thought. The president of the Fisheries Guild and the former village chief of Milo Village?

Supported by a young man resembling him, Juan Oro approached the Paco family’s carriage with his cane.

In the carriage, Rubió and Martha remained silent.

At that moment, a revolver appeared on Juan Oro’s forehead, pressing the cold muzzle against his flesh.

Lumian raised his chin slightly and looked at the president of the Fisheries Guild. With a calm expression, he asked, “Who allowed you to approach this carriage?”

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Chapter 549 - 549 True Purpose

549 True Purpose

The young man supporting Juan Oro glanced up at Lumian, who sat beside the carriage driver with one leg bent, the other propped up. His eyes blazed with undisguised anger.

The carriage driver jumped in fright and desperately tried to distance himself from Lumian. However, with a horse in front of him and Lugano on his left, dodging proved impossible in his haste.

Lugano swallowed hard, blaming his employer for being overly aggressive.

Is he trying to imitate Gehrman Sparrow?

But his employer hadn't exhibited such madness before; instead, he seemed intelligent!

Juan Oro, an elderly man with mottled black hair, seemed oblivious to the revolver pointed at his forehead. He turned his head, stepped aside from the firearm, and continued forward.

Observing this, Lumian pulled the trigger without hesitation.

Bang!

A yellow bullet shot from the revolver, heading straight for the side of Juan Oro's head.

At some point, a palm intercepted the bullet, causing it to decelerate and spin. The bullet landed in the palm, feeling as if it had fallen into a thick swamp.

The wide, bronzed hand belonged to the young man supporting Juan Oro. He glared at Lumian, his lips curling in disdain. Then, he bellowed, "Have you lost your mind?"

Before he could finish, fiery crimson orbs, nearly white in hue, materialized right in front of him, barely a meter away. They surrounded him in a blaze.

Almost instantly, Lumian felt as though he'd been ripped from reality. The carriage disappeared from beneath him, the ground vanished from his sight, and he found himself in an endless void of darkness.

The crimson fireballs, almost white, were controlled by an unseen force and changed direction, hurtling down from their original path.

Rumble!

They collided with the roadside dozens of meters away, carving deep, massive craters.

The horses, startled, reared up, neighing in terror. The carriage driver instinctively pulled at the reins, struggling to calm the panicked animals.

The “illusion” Lumian experienced dissolved with the explosion. He saw Juan Oro and the lad again.

Juan Oro, deeply wrinkled with his beard and hair standing on end, lifted his black cane and growled in a low voice, “Have you had enough?”

Lumian grinned and raised his revolver once more, aiming it at the president of the Fisheries Guild.

At that moment, Rubió Paco’s voice echoed from the rear carriage.

“Let them through,” he spoke in Intisian.

Only then did Lumian lower his arm and offer a smile in Intisian.

“My employer says you’re free to pass.”

He acted as if he couldn’t comprehend Juan Oro and the lad’s Highlander.

Juan Oro observed him for a moment before shifting his attention. Using his cane, he circled around to the side of the carriage. The lad supporting him shot a glare at Lumian, but he was at a loss for cuss words since Lumian couldn’t understand.

Juan Oro glanced at the window and calmly inquired, “Martha, I heard you’re not feeling well?”

“Yes,” the old lady weakly replied through the glass.

Juan Oro nodded.

“Has the Governor given you permission to seek treatment? Do you need my help in pleading your case?”

“He’s already given permission,” Rubió replied on behalf of his mother.

“That’s good.” Juan Oro nodded slightly and didn’t press further.

He turned and slowly walked toward the building housing the Governor of the Sea’s residence, using his cane as a crutch.

The young man supporting him shot a final glare at Lumian before refocusing on the old man.

Lumian adjusted his posture, acting as if nothing had transpired. He said to Lugano, “The carriage can continue forward.”

Lugano snapped out of his daze and quickly directed the startled carriage driver to soothe the horses and exit Milo Village as soon as possible.

Without any issues, they made their way back to 21 Saint Lana Street.

Lumian retrieved Ludwig, his mouth still glistening with oil, from Giorgia and smiled at Rubió Paco.

“Remember your promise. Otherwise…”

He smiled and left the statement hanging.

“Don’t worry,” Rubió replied in Intisian.

After Louis Berry, his godson, and the interpreter departed, Giorgia sighed in relief and glanced at her husband.

“I’ve never seen a child eat so much. He must be abnormal!”

“Otherwise, Louis Berry wouldn’t have let him stay with us so easily,” Rubió responded, unfazed.

…

Aquina Street, Solow Motel.

After shutting the door, Lugano couldn’t resist asking Lumian, “W-why were you so aggressive? He’s the president of the Port Santa Fisheries Guild, a big shot. And, we’re in Milo Village!”

He suspected his employer had some hidden agenda.

Lumian gave his guide a glance and grinned.

“Why else? When making a scene in public, it’s unlikely both parties can go all out. It’s the perfect chance to test them, see what they’re made of. Trying it under the cover of night, when no one cares about the Earth Mother Church’s authority and the Feynapotter government? That would be way too risky.”

If Lumian had discovered that Juan Oro had godlike powers, he’d need to act quickly and call for backup!

“Ah, I see…” Lugano had an epiphany.

His employer's craziness was just a facade. Every radical move had an ulterior motive!

But why is he in Port Santa? Is he planning something during the sea prayer ritual? Why target people from the Fisheries Guild?

That sounds very dangerous!

Should I resign early and forget about the remaining paycheck?

Lumian observed the silent interpreter and strolled over to a reclining chair in the living room, settling in with a smile. He leaned back and relaxed.

What he'd told Lugano was just one layer of the motivations behind his recent actions—the most surface-level one.

Most importantly, Lumian aimed to send a clear message with his radical actions:

He was in Port Santa to investigate the sea prayer ritual, unafraid of the Fisheries Guild or Milo Village. He possessed the strength and courage to back it up!

Breaking into the Governor of the Sea's residence or casually pointing a gun at Juan Oro's head and firing—all of it was to convey this information.

Lumian believed there were dissatisfied people in Port Santa regarding the Fisheries Guild's sea prayer ritual. After all, the primary beneficiaries were fishermen, sea merchants, and those in related industries, not representative of the entire Port Santa population.

For instance, even though the Church of Earth Mother and the Port Santa government had allowed the Fisheries Guild autonomy and excluded outsiders from involvement, someone bold enough to investigate, regardless of consequences, might tempt others. Could they silently or even covertly support this person to stir up trouble for their benefit?

Likewise, the beneficiaries wouldn't be united. Some gaining meant others losing; the powerful had jealous rivals. While not wanting the sea prayer ritual to end, they likely desired those in power to suffer and vacate their positions.

Lumian, by setting up a flag to investigate the sea prayer ritual and displaying decisiveness, steadfastness, and strength, didn't need to painstakingly gather clues. From his residence, he could receive various pieces of information, openly and covertly, and compare them to determine authenticity.

For an outsider with limited time, this was the fastest and most effective way to uncover the entire sea prayer ritual process and the truth about last year's accident.

For the key member of April Fool's lurking in the shadows, possibly setting a trap, this was a strategic move to draw attention to adventurer Louis Berry and raise suspicion.

In due time, armed with the acquired information and discovered clues, Lumian had a chance to expose them through their own trap.

Of course, the main drawback of this plan was its relative danger. Putting himself in the spotlight was a risk, but in the pursuit of prey, risks were inevitable. Moreover, Lumian had plenty of allies.

As these thoughts raced through Lumian's mind, he realized that becoming a Conspirer had given him a clearer understanding of the situation and the conflicts between various groups. Using a term favored by Aurore, he developed a deeper insight into conspiracies: "The most brilliant conspiracy is an open conspiracy!"

This became a key principle for his future acting.

Around 2 p.m., Lumian spotted his messenger, Penitent Baynfel, emerging from the void and handing him a letter.

Puzzled, he asked, "Who's it from?"

Haven't those he needed to communicate with already been reached?

"It's from the tall Demoness," Baynfel replied.

What's up with Franca again? Lumian took the letter and began reading.

The man she and Jenna encountered on the fourth level of the catacombs is suspected to be from the world where the Celestial Master resides—the world before her transmigration? Lumian's pupils dilated slightly.

This was different from the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society; they had transmigrated through their souls, but these individuals had brought their bodies over!

In the midst of his surprise, Lumian pondered a crucial question.

Why would someone like that venture into the fourth level of the catacombs?

Was it because the Samaritan Women's Spring lay sealed there, along with the River Styx's overflowing water that bridged the two worlds?

Had similar individuals entered our world before? If so, why hadn't they left any trace like Emperor Roselle and the other transmigrators?

Franca and Jenna's expedition to the fourth level of the catacombs appears laden with coincidences. Not only did they uncover a new Mirror World Fragment, but they also encountered such a person.

After penning a letter to Franca, Lumian was about to request Lugano to translate today's newspapers when footsteps echoed from the corridor.

His eyebrows twitched as he pulled up an armchair, facing the door.

Knock, knock, knock. A few seconds later, a knock resounded on their suite's door.

"Who is it?" Lugano inquired.

A mature and gentle voice floated from beyond the door.

"I'm Noelia of the Fertility Order."

Upon hearing this name, Lumian leaned back slightly and offered a smile.

He sensed that his digestion of the Conspirer potion had progressed a bit further.

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Chapter 550 - 550 Effects of the Sea Prayer Ritual

550 Effects of the Sea Prayer Ritual

550 Effects of the Sea Prayer Ritual

Lumian hesitated, embodying the character of the adventurer—Louis Berry—

grappling with the unfamiliarity of Highlander.

Once Lugano finished translating Noelia's words, he nodded gently, sporting a welcoming smile as he spoke in Intisian, "Come in, please."

Simultaneously, he rose from his seat.

Lugano, who had already reached the door, opened it.

The figure outside indeed proved to be Noelia, the combat nun of the Fertility Order. Contrary to expectation, she wasn't cloaked in black or adorned with religious headwear. Her thick, black, curly hair flowed over her brown leather armor, and her lively light-blue eyes exuded energy.

Lumian noticed the pair of straight swords strapped to Noelia's back and the revolver at her waist. Smiling, he stepped forward.

"Thank you for your assistance."

Previously dependent on Lugano's translation, Noelia replied in Intisian, "How did you know I was here to help?"

Lumian didn't conceal his intentions for today's performance. He raised his hand, pointing at his head, indicating deduction.

Of course, his gratitude stemmed from her aid in digesting the Conspirer potion.

Noelia's thick eyebrows twitched approvingly as she nodded.

Then, she turned her gaze to Lugano and Ludwig, as if seeking Lumian's opinion on whether to have them leave. Lugano's expression made it clear he preferred not to be part of it.

Sparing Lugano, Lumian gestured for him to take Ludwig outside, perhaps for street snacks.

After the two departed the suite, Lumian remarked to Noelia, “You actually know Intisian. You didn’t say a word of it earlier.”

Noelia replied with a smile, “We often take turns guarding the mountain passes in the southern foothills of the Pyraez mountain range.”

The Pyraez range, termed by the Feynapotter Kingdom, referred to the Dariège mountain range. Shepherds frequently traversed it, entering the plains and pastures of Gaia and other provinces.

Without awaiting Lumian’s further inquiry, Noelia tucked her hair behind her ear and grinned.

“It’s impolite to have a lady standing and chatting with you.”

Only then did Lumian invite Noelia to sit on the divan while he chose the armchair.

Noelia gazed at him and continued, “Port Santa’s sea prayer ritual dates back to the late Fourth Epoch. It’s over a thousand years old and can be considered ancient. The Church once purged it, relocating all relevant insiders and purifying all participants. However, less than a hundred years later, someone here began secretly conducting the sea prayer ritual again.”

She didn’t explain why she shared this history; it seemed like she was merely recounting.

“They didn’t continue purging it afterward?” Lumian inquired.

Noelia pursed her red lips and replied with a solemn expression, “In this matter, the brass’s orders are often contradictory. Sometimes, they let our Fertility Order handle it; other times, they signal us to observe for a while. All of this has been permitted by a second-in-command Blessed.”

Lumian, drawing knowledge from Madam Magician, the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, and other sources, had come to understand that the Earth Mother Church operated on two major systems: Favored and Blessed. Favored referred to Beyonders of the Earth and Moon pathways among clergymen. Meanwhile, Blessed encompassed Beyonders of other pathways favored by the Earth Mother. Orders from a Favored required at least one second-in-command Blessed to be valid. Without this, they risked being considered products of the influence of evil gods and demons.

Lumian found the Earth Mother Church’s intricate system perplexing, seemingly designed to guard against the Favored. Nevertheless, he believed that there must be a reason behind such complexity.

Having undergone numerous experiences, he became increasingly aware that seemingly inconspicuous rules in the mystical world often held lessons etched in blood.

After a moment of contemplation, Lumian inquired, “Are you a Favored or a Blessed?”

“I’m a Blessed,” Noelia replied without delving into the specifics of her pathway.

Lumian nodded slightly, indicating for her to continue.

Noelia smiled and sighed.

“After a long period of repetition, we eventually reached an unspoken agreement to allow the sea prayer ritual. At the very least, it brought prosperity to Port Santa without causing social chaos or significant disruptions beyond the participants.

“That decision was made ages ago, and while ancient dossiers provide a rough understanding, the exact reasons convincing matriarchs, presidents, and archbishops remain elusive. Essentially, the sea prayer ritual has evolved into a traditional folklore in Port Santa, fostering prosperity in maritime trade and fisheries.”

Crossing her arms over her chest, Noelia intoned with piety, “Life’s precious embrace, the harvest’s grace.”

Lumian, intrigued, narrowed his eyes and inquired, “Why did you change the prayer gesture?”

Is there a problem?

Noelia opened her eyes and grinned.

“This was a gesture frequently used in the past, but as Earth Mother regained some lost authority, we adopted a new posture for formal occasions.”

She rose, positioning her legs slightly apart, hands raised high, and passionately explained to Louis Berry as if preaching.

“The feet connect to the benevolent earth, and the palms reach towards the spiritual sky. In the middle resides the light of life. This is the domain of the Mother of All Things.”

One can regain some of Their lost authority? Lumian was puzzled, but that wasn’t the focal point.

Noelia settled back into her seat and continued, “While we haven’t deciphered the core process of the sea prayer ritual, years of surveillance have yielded some insights.

“The Governor of the Sea, who successfully gains the sea’s favor, wields the power to control this stretch of the sea, preventing shipwrecks. However, this seemingly comes at the cost of their lives and something more. Simultaneously, the ritual triggers rapid reproduction and thriving life in the area, ensuring

fishermen a bountiful harvest. It also intertwines with fate; families with Maidens of the Sea in their lineage tend to experience good fortune, not just due to preferential treatment."

The sea prayer ritual's effects are intricate, wielding the power of the sea domain and influencing fate, reproduction, and abundance… Lumian struggled to grasp the reasons behind these occurrences.

Noelia peered into Lumian's face, her eyes bright yet gentle, and said, "The committee members of the Fisheries Guild, some villagers from Milo Village, and participants in the core process of the sea prayer ritual have all acquired mystical powers. We once confronted the little devils you encountered. When pursuing certain criminals, we discovered them transformed into lizard-like monsters."

Humanoid lizards? Similar to the Paco family's? Lumian hadn't anticipated obtaining any clues from Noelia.

Noelia smiled.

"Later, we found a commonality among those who can transform into lizard-

like monsters."

"What is it?" Lumian couldn't conceal his curiosity.

Noelia replied with a faint smile, "Their mothers were once Maidens of the Sea."

Maidens of the Sea's children? Child of the Sea? Which of Rubió's siblings did I kill? Not only did he transform into a humanoid lizard, but he also went mad and severely injured his mother? Lumian swiftly connected the dots, sensing he had grasped the essence of the Paco family's commission.

Yet, confusion crept in.

If this information is known to families with Maidens of the Sea, why would the Paco family conceal it from Juan Oro and other committee members in the Fisheries Guild?

Noelia didn't seek his thoughts and teased, "After confirming the link between the lizard-like monsters and the sea prayer ritual, we intentionally alerted the Fisheries Guild committee members. Since then, no such criminals have surfaced. They show discipline and restraint. This is why, at times, I understand why the brass tacitly permit the sea prayer ritual in Port Santa. The participants are more obedient and easily controlled compared to adventurers like you."

Noelia implied: "I just advised you to stay away from the Fisheries Guild. Yet, the next day, you stormed into the Governor of the Sea's residence, pointing a gun at Juan Oro's head. That's much more troublesome than those involved with the sea prayer ritual!"

Lumian smiled, choosing not to comment.

Noelia pondered for a moment, locking eyes with him.

“I’m not sure why you’re investigating the sea prayer ritual, and I don’t want to know. What I can say is, if your actions endanger all of Port Santa, we will step in and expel you. With that condition, we might offer some assistance.”

Lumian picked up the straw hat beside him and pressed it against his chest.

“It would be an honor.”

Noelia left the Earth Mother Church’s objectives in this matter unspoken, and Lumian chose not to delve into it.

The combat nun of the Fertility Order rose, making her way toward the door.

With her left hand on the handle, she abruptly turned around, her eyes sparkling as she asked with a smile, “Do you want to have a child here?”

Lumian was taken aback.

“Madame, aren’t you changing the subject too quickly?”

Noelia’s eyes held a maternal glint as she said with pity, “According to our assessment, the sea prayer ritual is at least as dangerous as a Saint or a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact when fully utilized for a short period. I don’t know what you’re up to, but once you’re involved in this matter, you can’t escape just because you want to.

“Before that, have you considered leaving a descendant for yourself? I can help you.”

Are your Earth Mother Church’s combat nuns way of inviting someone to a one-night stand so special? Lumian was momentarily speechless.

Noelia spoke sincerely, “Descendants are the continuation of our lives. Flowers wither and fall to the ground, only to bloom into a more brilliant scenery the next year. Are you really not considering having a descendant?”

“Not for now,” Lumian replied with a cold expression.

Noelia expressed regret, “Whenever you think it through, come to me.”

With that, she opened the door and walked out.

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Chapter 551 - 551 Coming One After Another

551 Coming One After Another

Nevertheless, Noelia's kindness served as a reminder that delving into the sea prayer ritual wasn't a straightforward endeavor. The associated risks demanded the Church of Earth Mother's serious consideration.

Despite this, Lumian believed that many dangers could be sidestepped, and he wasn't inclined to actively confront them.

His primary objective wasn't to unveil the truth behind the sea prayer ritual and eradicate the influence of folklore on Port Santa, preventing its inhabitants from transforming into monsters. His true goal lay in unraveling the details of the April Fool's prank to track down Ultraman and Bard, executing them one by one. With Port Santa plagued by numerous problems and abscesses, Lumian saw no need to expose them; he could withdraw in a timely manner.

Concealing his true motives was a fundamental principle of acting as a Conspirer!

This could lead others to misinterpret his decisions and react incorrectly during critical moments.

After shutting the door, Lumian grabbed the golden straw hat and settled into the recliner. Smirking at the corridor, he muttered to himself with interest, Who will be the next to provide information?

Rubió Paco, who clearly dislikes the Maidens of the Sea and detests such matters, or the families who have lost their positions as committee members of the Fisheries Guild for many years?

Beneath the bright sunlight outside the window, Lumian swiftly flipped through the textbooks he had purchased, hoping to memorize and grasp more relevant knowledge. He couldn't wait until the charms' effects wore off, leaving nothing in his mind.

About an hour later, unfamiliar footsteps echoed through the corridor.

Knock, knock, knock. Another knock resonated on his door.

"Who is it?" Lumian inquired in simple Highlander.

“The book you bought has arrived,” the motel owner, Otta Guillaume, replied in Intisian.

The book I bought? When have I ever bought a book? Lumian pondered, standing up thoughtfully. He opened the door and received a cheaply packaged but colorful book from the old man.

The title of the book was “Travel around Feynapotter.”

Lumian pretended not to get the title written in Highlander and chuckled at himself.

“I’ll have to wait for my interpreter to swing back and decode it for me. Might not even wrap my head around it before I bid Feynapotter farewell by flipping through a dictionary.”

Otta Sr. expressed his understanding.

“When I first landed in Port Santa, seven or eight mates shared an Intisian-

Highlander dictionary. None of us dared to venture out solo. But after hanging around a bit and pushing ourselves to chat with the locals, we gradually got the hang of it. Truth be told, Highlander’s quite similar to Intisian.”

He turned the book over, gripping its spine and giving it a shake.

Lumian caught it and flicked it open with a swift motion.

Written on it was Intisian:

“The Maidens of the Sea are also not allowed to leave Port Santa or tie the knot with outsiders. But exceptions have cropped up over the years.

“Feynapotter’s women dig romance before tying the knot and chase after love. The ladies of Port Santa are no different. Throughout the past millennium, plenty of Maidens of the Sea have bolted to preserve their love or freedom. Around 30 to 40 have made it out. The most recent case dates back over 20 years. A Maiden of the Sea married an Intisian and had a kid. We’re unsure if she’s still alive because the Fisheries Guild has been hunting her down.

“Her child’s name is Nolfi. You might know her. She’s already back in Port Santa.”

Nolfi? Batna Comté’s lover? She’s actually a child of a Maiden of the Sea. She even dragged her “partner” to Port Santa to witness the sea prayer ceremony… Lumian sometimes felt something was off with Nolfi while on the Flying Bird, but he never guessed she was so tied up with the sea prayer ritual.

This made him wonder about Nolfi’s real reasons for returning to Port Santa. Batna Comté might find himself in a mind-boggling mess over this romantic fling.

Lumian's eyes shifted down as he read the last line.

"Once you're out of these waters and Port Santa, the mystical powers from the sea prayer ritual weakens significantly. Against folks from other regions, the Fisheries Guild mostly wrangles them using adventurers, bounty hunters, and professional assassins."

Is this a go ahead to meddle with the sea prayer ritual and dig into it? As long as I could slip out of Port Santa and these waters, the Fisheries Guild's committee members would be powerless against me? Lumian had no clue about the identity of the person who delivered the paper and the intel. After all, he hadn't seen many folks' handwriting in Port Santa, but he could unmistakably sense their eagerness and anticipation.

Crimson flames roared to life, consuming the white paper laden with information. Lumian reclined, sipping on Feynapotter Kingdom's famed Manzan, the top-tier white wine produced in specific regions without dilution. He absentmindedly flipped through the book "Travel around Feynapotter" penned in Highlander.

The author raved about Feynapotter Kingdom's diverse culinary delights, praising beef, mutton, and pork while expressing disdain for the local tobacco, likening it to smoking chili.

After a stretch, Lugano returned to the suite with Ludwig, bearing a stack of street snacks—roasted baby octopuses, lamb loin, fried fish, potatoes, corn omelet, and pork rolls.

Lumian had long set aside "Travel around Feynapotter." He rose and addressed Lugano,

"Don't forget to change your appearance tomorrow to fetch our new IDs. Also, figure out where Batna Comté will be in the next two days. I want to share a drink with him."

"Alright, alright." Lugano couldn't fathom why his employer suddenly wanted to locate the finely dressed adventurer, but he sensed it wasn't as simple as a casual drink.

After assigning the task, Lumian grabbed the sun straw hat and casually mentioned as he sauntered toward the door, "I'm stepping out for a bit. I'll be back before dinner."

"D-do you need any translations?" Lugano asked instinctively.

Lumian chuckled in response.

"I'm just taking a stroll, getting a feel for the terrain. No need to chat with anyone. Don't worry, I won't lose my way."

Lugano tersely acknowledged and refrained from probing further.

He trusted that his employer's adept body language skills would make simple communication a breeze.

Once out of Solow Motel, Lumian ambled down the street.

…

Solow Motel, fifth-floor suite.

As Ludwig polished off the fermented grape juice, he leaped from the chair and headed briskly to the washroom.

Lugano slouched on the sofa, reluctant to budge.

After tending to the child for nearly two hours, fatigue had settled in. Lugano yearned for a break. His plan was to gather intel on Batna Comté and rendezvous with the spirited Feynapotter ladies at the bar later in the night.

Ludwig entered the washroom, lifted the toilet lid, and half-closed his eyes.

As he relieved himself with determination, a slim silhouette emerged from the shadows in the corner.

The black shadow took the form of an insect, about the thickness of a finger, with long bristles on its surface resembling spoiled food.

Its bristles fluttered, extending like tentacles, reaching out to touch everything in its path.

As it twisted, the black shadow silently crept up behind Ludwig. It abruptly stood up and plunged its head into Ludwig's cervical spine.

At that moment, it caught sight of the boy's brown eyes.

Abruptly, it froze, holding its shape like a snake rearing its upper body.

Ludwig, at some point, had ceased urinating and half-turned around.

He extended his right palm and seized the black shadow.

The shadow didn't put up a fight.

In the next instant, the chubby boy, Ludwig, shoved the black shadow into his mouth.

Amidst distinct chewing sounds, the lower half of the shadow's body twisted upward, melding with the blurry flesh in front of it.

In the blink of an eye, Ludwig consumed the black shadow as if it were a bowl of Feynapotter noodles.

He licked his lips, appearing as though he wanted another serving.

…

Outside Aquina Street, in the café adorned with flowers on every table.

Along the way, Lumian stumbled upon two street brawls. He snagged a skewer of Port Santa's roasted octopuses for a quick bite, yet no one approached him discreetly, attempted to stuff him with something, or whispered secret messages. There were no covert attacks.

Under the radiant sky and brilliant sun, he chose a quiet corner in a café, ordering a glass of Torres coffee with milk, relishing its rich bitterness with patience.

As time drifted by, a woman donned in a blue veil and an exquisite dress suddenly took a seat across from Lumian.

She scanned the surroundings and swiftly raised the blue fishnet hanging from the brim of her hat.

It wasn't a woman—it was a man.

A man dressed in women's attire, with distinctive features and grayish-blue eyes that couldn't conceal the anxiety on his face.

Lumian's pupils widened.

He recognized the man in the feminine garb.

It was the current Governor of the Sea!

The same Governor of the Sea whom Martha had bowed to in the cathedral-

like building, served by numerous maids!

He sought me out? The one coming to me is actually him? Lumian was both astonished and oddly convinced that this made sense.

Noticing that the adventurer Louis Berry had identified him, the Governor of the Sea lowered the blue veil, shrouding his face once more.

Then, he hushed his voice and spoke in Highlander, filled with desire and concern, "Save me! Save me!"

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Chapter 552 - 552 Fake and Reality

552 Fake and Reality

Lumian didn't find the current Governor of the Sea's plea for help surprising.

He raised his left hand and touched his ear. In Intisian, he asked, "What are you saying? I only understand the word 'help.'"

The current Governor of the Sea, disguised as a woman, appeared dumbfounded, as if the language barrier was unexpected.

Having racked his brains and risked his life to reach Louis Berry, the Governor of the Sea found himself unable to convey his request due to the language barrier!

Maintaining his pretense of not understanding Highlander, Lumian calmly took out a dark-red fountain pen and a stack of post-it notes, handing them over.

"Write down everything you want to say. I'll get someone to translate it."

This time, he used Intisian again but gestured with the fountain pen to guide the other party on what to do.

If the Governor of the Sea is illiterate and unable to write Highlander, it would be troublesome… I would have to resort to communicating with individual words and body language. I don't want to reveal my knowledge of Highlander yet… Lumian thought with concern.

In Intis and Feynapotter, there were numerous illiterate individuals.

The Governor of the Sea, after a brief moment of confusion, grasped Louis Berry's intentions. He took the fountain pen and note and began scribbling.

Lumian observed with a composed expression. Despite being on the opposite side, with a Hunter's vision and spatial imagination, he easily discerned the content of the written message:

"Please help me. Rescue me out of Port Santa! I'm not the true Governor of the Sea!"

Not the true Governor of the Sea… Lumian suppressed the urge to raise his eyebrows and refrained from directly asking, maintaining an appearance of complete ignorance of the words.

He desired to see what additional information the current Governor of the Sea would reveal before considering his next set of questions.

The man dressed in feminine attire paused for two seconds before continuing,

“The true Governor of the Sea died during last year’s sea prayer ritual.”

Dead? The genuine Governor of the Sea perished during the sea prayer ritual? Lumian felt a sudden surge of joy at this revelation.

I can finally see the tail of the key members of April Fool’s!

One consequence of their prank last year was the predetermined Governor of the Sea’s failure to successfully perform the sea prayer ritual. He suffered a backlash from Beyonder powers and lost his life!

This aligned with the revelations from Otta Guillaume, the Solow Motel owner, and his son, a government department clerk, regarding an increase in shipwrecks, a decline in fish harvests, and disrupted trade.

The imposter Governor of the Sea wrote swiftly, as if fearing someone might catch up to him at any moment.

“I was chosen by Juan Oro and the Fisheries Guild to impersonate the Governor of the Sea for a year because I resemble the true Governor of the Sea. This was to prevent fishermen and sea merchants from knowing about their grave mistake and the slip-up that caused the sea prayer ritual to fail. Such a failure has not occurred in recent centuries.

“Now that I know this secret, they won’t let me leave alive. After the Governor of the Sea handover ritual is completed and the vigil begins, I’ll undoubtedly be killed.

“I never wanted to play the role of Governor of the Sea. It was a blasphemy against the sea, but they pointed a gun at me, claiming they had already killed someone who refused to cooperate.

“The Church and the government won’t intervene in the Fisheries Guild’s affairs. You’re the only one daring enough to infiltrate the Governor of the Sea’s residence and confront Juan Oro with a gun. I can only seek your help. Over the past year, I’ve saved up quite a bit of money. I can give it all to you—

100,000 gold risot!

“I’ve heard about your recent exploits. I believe you have the strength. I implore you to help me!”

Quite educated… Lumian, after studying the three completed post-it notes, sensed that the imposter Governor of the Sea differed from ordinary fishermen, vendors, or workers based on his grammar and vocabulary.

Phew… After jotting down his reasons and request, the fake Governor of the Sea set aside the fountain pen and slid three post-it notes filled with Highlander words to Lumian.

With a quick glance, Lumian contemplated using Highlander words and body language.

“Help? Your. Family?”

The fake Governor of the Sea hastily wrote down a response: “My parents passed away a few years ago. I don’t have any other relatives. I was originally an employee of the Fisheries Company.”

It’s no surprise Juan Oro and his associates dared to “kidnap” this person to be the Governor of the Sea. The Earth Mother Church refrains from meddling in the Fisheries Guild’s internal affairs. If it affects other citizens, they will still handle it… Lumian pretended to ask first and planned to find someone later to translate the response.

“Servant girls. Pregnant?”

He inquired about the maids in the Governor of the Sea’s residence and the reason for their pregnancies.

The fake Governor of the Sea, concealed behind a blue veil, displayed no change in expression. His right hand trembled slightly as he wrote: “The Governor of the Sea will receive the same treatment as the ruler of Port Santa. He can appoint anyone from Milo Village, the Fisheries Guild, and those sea merchant families as his maids and guards. He can do whatever he wants and directly visit them, enjoying the treatment an owner can receive.

“I couldn’t help it.”

Observing this, Lumian nearly laughed aloud.

Even in captivity, he’s focused on such matters? Does he believe he can’t escape and is resigned to his imminent demise? Is he seeking enjoyment while he still can?

The fake Governor of the Sea added: “I can also tax those people and forcefully allocate their market share, but they will listen to me. However, I dare not go too far. Otherwise, Juan Oro will privately whip me with his cane and threaten to kill me.”

So, this is the source of your savings? Well, he can’t control the weather or the tides. After all, he’s merely a false Governor… Lumian took the fake Governor of the Sea’s new post-it note and pondered for a moment before asking in a clumsy manner, “Original. Governor. Where?”

He inquired about the whereabouts of the former Governors of the Sea.

Noelia, the combat nun of the Fertility Order, hadn't raised this issue before. It was unclear if she deemed it unimportant, chose not to disclose it for some reason, or lacked the corresponding information.

The fake Governor of the Sea wrote: "I don't know. I heard a maid from Milo Village mention it before. She's Juan Oro's granddaughter. She said that all the Governors of the Sea will eventually return to the sea."

Return to the sea… That doesn't sound promising… Heh heh, designating Juan Oro's granddaughter as your maid. Are you seeking revenge for the oppression from her grandfather? And Juan Oro agreed to it, indirectly retaliating by lashing you? Juan Oro and his sons are married to Maidens of the Sea, and there's a chance his granddaughter is a lizard-like monster… How would you feel if you knew you were sleeping with a humanoid lizard? Lumian criticized the fake Governor of the Sea internally.

He seemed to ponder for a moment, as if unable to comprehend the other party's writing, and changed the question.

"Juan Oro. Powerful?"

The fake Governor of the Sea suddenly shuddered.

Swiftly, he wrote: "He's very powerful. He's a monster! He can suffocate people and cause them to die in pain!"

After writing this, the fake Governor of the Sea glanced at the sun outside the window. He set down the fountain pen, stood up, and bowed to Lumian.

Then, swaying in his elegant dress, he made his way toward the café's back door and departed.

He appeared anxious about his "disappearance" during the shopping trip potentially raising suspicions from the bodyguards.

Lumian observed his departure, crumpling the post-it notes into a ball in his palm.

Crimson flames trickled from between his fingers before swiftly dissipating.

After sprinkling the ashes into the bottle with flowers, Lumian picked up the partially finished Torres coffee and took a sip.

Lumian's mind raced as he analyzed the information that concerned him the most.

Is what the imposter said true? Could an ordinary person find an opportunity to escape their bodyguards and approach me? Is it possible that Juan Oro and the others secretly prompted him to set a trap for me, waiting for me to fall into it?

During the April Fool's prank, the specially crafted golden ring, lacking Beyonder powers, was concealed within the lamb's body. The lamb was taken as a sacrifice

on the Governor of the Sea's ship…

Is April Fool's meant to substitute something with this ring? Is there another sacrificial ring similar to it?

Did the Governor of the Sea's appointment fail last year because the crucial sacrificial ring turned out to be a fake and couldn't be utilized?

This implies that key members of April Fool's or their subordinates are on the special ship. Otherwise, they wouldn't have been able to deceive the committee members of the Fisheries Guild and surreptitiously replace important items…

Based on the information I've gathered, there aren't many sailors on that ship. The only passengers are the Governor of the Sea, four Maidens of the Sea, and a few individuals guiding them through the ritual. Who among them is connected to April Fool's?

The Fisheries Guild must have conducted an investigation afterward. I wonder if they've drawn any conclusions…

I can't dismiss the possibility that the deceased Governor of the Sea is linked to April Fool's. Maybe he was completely deceived, thinking that by changing the ring and causing the ritual to fail, he could avoid returning to the sea like the previous Governors of the Sea. However, Bard, Mad Lady, and Ultraman may not have cared about his life at all…

What's the purpose of April Fool's? Is it merely a prank for their own amusement, or does it harbor a deeper motive?

Ordinary April Fool's members might engage purely for entertainment. As for the key members, truth and lies are invariably intertwined…

Sitting in the café until the sun neared the horizon, Lumian donned the straw hat and leisurely made his way back to the Solow Motel.

Late at night, Lugano returned from the bar, emanating the scent of alcohol. He approached Lumian and said,

"I've inquired with adventurers and bounty hunters about Batna and his lover. They all claim not to have seen them in the past few days. As soon as they arrived at Port Santa, it was as if they vanished."

Vanished? Nolfi, being the child of a Maiden of the Sea, wouldn't be so clandestine if she were merely returning to Port Santa and the Fisheries Guild… Could she be involved in something related to the sea prayer ritual and convinced Batna to join her? Yet, they were targeted upon their return? Perhaps she possesses significant knowledge… I can't personally search for them right now. I need to be more visible as an adventurer… Lugano isn't the most reliable source… What about Noelia, the nun? A flurry of speculations raced through Lumian's mind.

As his thoughts raced, he suddenly realized the kind of assistance he should seek from the Knight of Swords.

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Chapter 553 - 553 Half-Fairy

553 Half-Fairy

Lumian remained composed, not rushing to summon the messenger of the Minor Arcana, the Knight of Swords. His patience persisted as he waited for a particular individual.

Since expressing a strong desire to investigate the sea prayer ritual and taking action, only three waves of people had contacted him today, openly or covertly. Yet, the person he awaited the most had not shown up.

Maybe Rubió Paco prefers to wait until late at night when there's no one around? Shaking off his thoughts, he smiled at Lugano.

"Batna just began his fling with Nolfi. He might want to explore all the villages, towns, pastures, and vineyards around Port Santa before the sea prayer ritual. If you hear anything about him later, inform me. There's no need to deliberately inquire."

Lugano didn't think it was a big deal and smiled understandingly.

"Maybe he even took on some missions along the way—earning some bucks while traveling."

Once the interpreter and Ludwig retired to their rooms, Lumian settled into a recliner and casually perused the Highlander textbooks under the soft glow of the gas wall lamp.

As time passed, the night grew quieter.

Lumian, confirming no further intel would arrive that night, pondered the situation.

Stroking his chin, he pondered this matter.

It seems more people are observing. Unless the great adventurer's investigation makes a breakthrough and remains unscathed, they won't easily place their bets until I demonstrate greater reliability or value.

The trio who reached out today possesses distinct traits. One affiliated with the Earth Mother Church, insulated from losses even if their gamble fails. Would the Fisheries Guild risk confrontation with the cathedral and the Fertility Order?

The second, the imposter Governor of the Sea, faces high odds of death during the sea prayer ritual. He'd clutch at any chance for survival. Additionally, his lack of confidence in both the Earth Mother Church and Port Santa's government makes him value the adventurer capable of defeating the Demon Warlock more. However, his plea might be a trap by the Fisheries Guild.

The third, elusive figure hinted at useful clues without divulging the sea prayer ritual's secret…

After careful contemplation, Lumian gained deeper insight into the mindsets and choices of various factions.

Conspiracies often manipulated human emotions, exploiting the circumstances at hand. Lumian found himself increasingly fascinated by these two aspects.

This was both a daily routine and an essential necessity.

Putting aside the Highlander textbook, Lumian returned to his bedroom.

Closing the door, a black mark on his body emitted a faint glow.

Bottle of Fiction!

Lumian enveloped the entire room within the Bottle of Fiction. The entry conditions were simple—only spirit world creatures.

Ripple-like light briefly adorned the walls, floor, and ceiling of the bedroom before swiftly vanishing, leaving everything appearing entirely ordinary.

Only then did Lumian compose the letter and arrange the ritual. He sanctified the dagger, erected a wall of spirituality, and lit the candle representing him.

Stepping back, he spoke in ancient Hermes, "I!"

Then, switching to Hermes, he said, "I summon in my name:

"A peculiar creature wandering above the world, a half-fairy who fiddles with melodic strings, a messenger that belongs solely to the Knight of Swords…"

The orange candle flame transformed instantly into a deep blue hue, expanding to half the size of a human.

In the blue radiance, a figure of blood-red hue emerged from the candle flame.

Resembling a female human in form, it shared traits with a creature Lumian had encountered in Cordu's ruins. Devoid of skin or external coverings, it exposed bloody muscles, bluish-black blood vessels, ghastly white tendons, oily yellow fat, and large red or white fascia.

Lumian studied the 1.7-meter-tall Knight of Swords messenger and pondered silently, Does Half-Fairy mean it's divided internally?

I assumed it would be either split vertically or horizontally…

Don't you know how to fiddle with melodic strings? Where are they?

With these musings racing through his mind, Lumian handed the folded letter to the messenger and politely uttered in Hermes, "Kindly deliver this to the Knight of Swords."

As his strength grew, Lumian became increasingly aware that most messengers he encountered could be lethal—if unafraid to unleash the corruptive source, Termiboros.

Though Lumian couldn't gauge the strength of the Knight of Swords' messenger —the Half-Fairy—all his experience urged him to maintain politeness.

The black and white eyeballs of the Half-Fairy, embedded in the blood-

colored face, darted around before gently nodding and accepting the letter.

It spoke with a clear, pleasant voice akin to a mountain stream's flow, "I'll deliver it promptly."

How melodious. It's like a bard strumming a guitar… Lumian snapped out of his reverie.

He suddenly grasped the reason for the messenger's melodic string prefix.

"Thank you." He bowed politely.

Observing the Half-Fairy about to retreat into the blue candle flame, Lumian couldn't suppress his curiosity and inquired, "What would you do if given human skin?"

The Half-Fairy fixed its black-and-white eyes on Lumian for a few seconds.

As it delved into the blue candle flame, it left behind a melodious voice, "I'll put it on."

You'll embody whoever's skin you wear? Has the Half-Fairy always sought its other half? Lumian speculated.

At that moment, he recalled an unfinished promise.

Help the Abscessed Hand find its body!

This pledge determined whether Lumian could attain godhood and advance to Sequence 4. However, being only a Sequence 6, he wasn't in a rush.

…

Late at night, in Trier's market district, within an empty room.

Franca, clad in an assassin suit, was having her first face-to-face encounter with 007.

As moments drifted by, 007 strode in, sporting a brown lion headgear and a double-breasted coat.

After confirming his identity, Franca pushed back her hood, emerging from the shadows.

"What brings us to this in-person discussion?" 007 inquired, his brow furrowed.

His instincts screamed to decline, yet he sensed the gravity of the situation. Failing to act promptly could result in a colossal catastrophe.

Ultimately, he acceded to Hidden Blade's request for a meeting.

Franca chuckled, emotions swirling within.

"It's a good thing."

"I'm skeptical when it comes from you, Hidden Blade," 007 expressed his concern openly.

Franca clarified her reason for requesting an "offline" meeting, "It's true. I need your help to find someone. Telegrams can't convey a portrait. I can't craft a digital image using just words and dots, can I?"

007 regarded Franca with suspicion.

"Simply seeking help to locate someone? No ulterior motives?"

Franca chuckled.

"For now, that's all I can divulge."

"That only heightens my apprehension." 007 keenly sensed the search for this individual might harbor a crucial issue. Otherwise, Hidden Blade, having witnessed catastrophic events, wouldn't have taken it so seriously. She wouldn't have insisted on an offline meeting and handing over the portrait personally. More likely, she would have left it somewhere for retrieval.

Franca produced a portrait, drawn through dream divination and ritualistic magic, and passed it to 007.

Upon receiving it, 007's hand naturally emitted a sunlight-like glow, revealing the photo-like drawing in the dark night.

The depicted figure wore a black robe, with his head slightly turned, revealing very short dark hair that seemed freshly grown. The facial contours on his side profile were gentle, and his sickly pale-white skin contrasted with his dark brown eyes, which were not sunken enough.

Initially, 007 perceived nothing remarkable, but trusting Hidden Blade's knack for stirring trouble, he scrutinized it for more than ten seconds.

Beneath the lion's headgear, his brow furrowed as he whispered, "This doesn't seem like someone from any country in the Northern Continent."

Franca smiled playfully and self-deprecatingly.

"Don't you think he resembles us from before we transmigrated?"

007 froze, as if struck by lightning.

He studied the drawing repeatedly and fell silent for nearly 20 seconds before saying,

"Hidden Blade, do you understand what you're saying?"

Franca raised her head slightly and said in a deep voice, "I suspect he came from that country from our world.

"Muggle, I, and the others found signs of interaction between both worlds before!"

"When? What signs?" 007 interjected, fighting the urge to grab Hidden Blade's shoulder and shake her for every bit of information.

Franca chuckled.

"I'm not at liberty to answer you. I can only reveal it after discussing with Muggle and the others. There are many secrets involved. First, discreetly search for the person in the portrait. I encountered him on the fourth level of the catacombs."

007 struggled to contain his impatience, resisting the temptation to handcuff Hidden Blade for details. Through gritted teeth, he said, "Can't you guys discuss it first before involving me?"

I was just considerate of your emotions, afraid that you'd lose control upon receiving so much information at one go… Franca let out a hollow laugh and replied,

"It's not time to meet Muggle and the others yet. I need to find him urgently, afraid he might leave Trier.

"Calm down, calm down. You can't hide your desire to kill me."

Franca smiled sheepishly, fading into the shadows.

Holding the portrait, 007 took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

…

Feynapotter Kingdom, Port Santa, Solow Motel.

After breakfast, Lumian had just returned to the master bedroom when he sensed a sudden chill.

Simultaneously, a tarot card materialized on the desk.

The card depicted a knight running with a sword in hand.

Minor Arcana card, Knight of Swords!

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Chapter 554 - 554 Favor

554 Favor

554 Favor

Lumian's gaze fixated on the Minor Arcana card before he noticed another person standing in front of the full-body mirror in the room.

The man sported a white shirt and a black vest, his face unusually pale and his brown hair tousled, suggesting he had just woken up.

For some inexplicable reason, Lumian sensed a conflicting demeanor in this person—elusive yet restrained. The brown eyes held an indescribable weight, akin to staring into an abyss.

"Knight of Swords?" Lumian inquired.

The man nodded subtly and responded, "Seven of Wands, how may I assist you?"

Surprised, Lumian questioned, "How do you know I'm the Seven of Wands?" Lumian hadn't disclosed his exact code name in the letter, merely stating he sought help from the Knight of Swords as guided by Madam Magician.

The Knight of Swords spoke slowly, as if holding back something.

"Ma'am Hermit informed me that the Seven of Wands, affiliated with Madam Magician, would soon arrive in Feynapotter, possibly in need of intel or assistance."

Madam Magician intentionally communicated with Ma'am Hermit about me, Lumian realized.

"I need your help locating two individuals in Port Santa and the surrounding seas. Try not to alert any factions."

"Be specific," the Knight of Swords replied, economical with his words.

Lumian shared Batna Comté and Nolfi's details, adding, "I'm not certain if they're still alive. They might have become corpses by now."

As he spoke, he handed two photo-like sketches to the Knight of Swords—a unique skill he'd acquired from Aurore's grimoires and his expertise in ritualistic magic. These images, directly replicated from his mind, bore an uncanny resemblance to photographs.

The ritualistic magic involved in creating such images demanded a suitable and secure target for prayer—a practice more common among official Beyonders who had orthodox gods to appeal to. Wild Beyonders rarely resorted to praying to dangerous entities for trivial matters. Being part of the Tarot Club, Lumian straddled both worlds, with the ability to seek aid from Mr. Fool or tap into Madam Magician's strength.

The Knight of Swords studied the photo-like sketches before affirming, "I'll help you find them as soon as possible."

There was no demand for payment or any immediate request, prompting Lumian to sigh.

Organizations do have their advantages!

Internal assistance often translated into favors, subtly binding individuals to reciprocal obligations. Some preferred setting clear prices rather than owing favors,

but Lumian didn't entertain such thoughts. Securing the Knight of Swords' presence and help was already a considerable favor in itself.

He pondered for a moment and then inquired, "What mission do you have in Feynapotter? Do you need my assistance?"

The Knight of Swords paused briefly before responding, "The matter in Feynapotter is wrapping up, but I'll be heading to the Southern Continent soon. I might require your help there."

"Sure thing," Lumian agreed.

Intrigued, he asked, "Is Ma'am Hermit also overseeing matters in the Southern Continent?"

Wasn't she too busy?

Madam Magician had indicated that this Major Arcana card holder primarily dealt with sea-related affairs and a clandestine organization dedicated to the Hidden Sage, with little involvement in the Southern Continent.

The Knight of Swords replied in a subdued tone, "It's a personal matter, unrelated to Ma'am Hermit."

"Got it," Lumian acknowledged. Many of his past tasks weren't orchestrated by Madam Magician, and even his mission in Port Santa to track down April Fool's key member was considered personal business if it didn't involve the Celestial Worthy.

After a two-second pause, the Knight of Swords added, "Moreover, I'm only temporarily under Ma'am Hermit's command."

What does he mean by temporarily subordinate? Can one switch to other Major Arcana card holders in the future? Lumian wondered.

Without explanation, the Knight of Swords' form suddenly turned ethereal and disappeared.

Lumian, without activating his Spirit Vision, couldn't catch the departing figure in time.

It doesn't feel like teleportation or blending into the shadows… After a quick assessment, he changed into a brownish-green short-sleeved shirt and loose brownish-yellow pants commonly seen in Port Santa.

Exiting the master bedroom, Lumian tossed the Lie earring to Lugano.

"Go to Valerio and get the new IDs. Remember the face you used when you last saw him."

"I remember it clearly." Lugano took the Lie earring.

As Lugano was about to proceed with his disguise, Lumian halted him.

"Find a secluded spot after leaving the room to use it. When you return, shift back to your original appearance before entering the motel."

Doesn't this mean I'll have this mystical item to myself for a while? Aren't you worried I might take off with it? It's not just unique; it's valuable! Lugano refrained from probing further. Following his employer's instructions, he took the Lie earring, a bag containing his disguise, and exited the room.

Observing Lugano's departure, Lumian picked up a golden straw hat and addressed Ludwig, "There's plenty of food in my bedroom. Stay put until I'm back."

"Sure thing," Ludwig agreed, seemingly eager.

Would someone exploit the absence of his guardians to attack him, the boy?

Lumian, passing by the sofa, casually placed the golden straw hat on Ludwig's head.

Simultaneously, he switched to a common round-rimmed felt hat and left the suite gradually.

He wasn't concerned about Ludwig being alone in the motel. In fact, those who might come into contact with the boy faced more significant risks.

Lumian adjusted his hat in the corridor and activated Shadow Transformation.

Swiftly, he transformed into a pure shadow, blending into the darkness at the base of the walls on both sides.

In the dark, veiled void, Lumian inhaled the scent of the gray amber perfume he had deliberately left on the Lie earring, using it to track Lugano.

His intent wasn't merely to determine whether the interpreter was problematic but to anticipate a potential attack.

With adventurer Louis Berry probing the sea prayer ritual and presenting himself as resolute and radical, it was likely the Fisheries Guild and Milo Village would swiftly react in a decisive manner, eliminating this outsider to dissuade others and factions from clandestinely stirring.

In this scenario, Lumian, Lugano, and Ludwig were at risk.

He specifically tasked Lugano to seek Valerio alone for the IDs, intending to see if Juan Oro and others had their eyes on his companions, seizing an opportunity to strike Lugano.

This strategy allowed Lumian to swiftly intervene if needed, rescuing Lugano while potentially neutralizing some Beyonders from the Fisheries Guild, showcasing the adventurer's strength and instilling confidence in onlookers, compelling further attempts.

However, the Fisheries Guild and Milo Village might not act immediately. They might feign vulnerability, luring hidden adversaries to reveal themselves before eliminating them in one fell swoop.

Lumian shadowed Lugano to Valerio's underground casino, observing him pay the remaining 50 gold risot for two local IDs.

No attack… Could it be the Fisheries Guild is fishing, or did they fail to recognize Lugano after he used the Lie earring? Lumian pondered the potential reasons while traversing through the shadows.

Lugano hurriedly avoided lingering on the streets, well aware that his employer had incurred the wrath of the Fisheries Guild. He feared being ambushed by those unwilling to target Lumian, dragged into an alley, and subjected to a brutal beating.

Seeking refuge in a crevice between two buildings near Solow Motel, he swiftly reverted to his altered appearance. Removing the Lie earring, he switched into his customary black formal suit,

finally exhaling a sigh of relief. He turned onto Aquina Street and made his way back to the motel's entrance.

Several tramps lay dozing on both sides of the street, basking lazily in the sunlight.

Lumian was aware that unlike the severe tramp situation in the Loen Kingdom and the Intis Republic, Feynapotter's tramp issue was less acute due to fertile soil, ample pastures, and the Church's modified agricultural methods, resulting in surplus food production.

Here, food was notably cheaper, about 15 to 20% lower compared to Intis and other countries. Previously, before the Loen Kingdom began importing food from Feynapotter, the price of rye bread of the same weight was nearly twice as high.

Despite the abundance, bankrupt farmers, herders, and city dwellers ended up as tramps due to land acquisition, loan sharks, and other reasons. However, they received free food from various sources like the cathedral of Earth Mother, the Fertility Order, government departments, and charitable organizations, which although not filling, prevented starvation, allowing them to recuperate and find new opportunities.

As Lugano neared Solow Motel, Lumian, concealed in the shadows, sensed a disturbance.

Three tramps on the street abruptly stiffened, adjusting their postures unnaturally.

In an instant, they sprang to their feet like puppet marionettes, drawing revolvers in an odd manner and aiming at Lugano from three different angles.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Their white-eyed state left Lugano no room to evade as they pulled their triggers successively.

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Chapter 555 - 555 Monster Illustrated

555 Monster Illustrated

555 Monster Illustrated

It wasn’t until three tramps pointed revolvers at him that Lugano sprang into action.

As a seasoned bounty hunter, he had no time to discern where the assailants planned to shoot. He pushed off with strength in his feet, swiftly lunging to the side.

He dodged two bullets, but the third one was too close, altering his trajectory

—inevitably striking him.

In midair, Lugano did something unconventional.

Instead of curling up to shield vital spots, he extended his body, using his palm to shield his chest.

Bang!

The bullet connected with his right rib, unleashing a vivid spray of blood.

With a thud, Lugano landed on the street, rolling forward to evade subsequent shots.

In the midst of his lunge, Lumian’s form materialized from the shadows by the roadside. He delivered a powerful punch to the tramp who had just fired.

With a resounding thud, the tramp’s eyes rolled back, and he crumpled, unconscious.

Lumian returned to the shadows and swiftly moved behind another tramp. Before he could fire a second shot, Lumian punched him behind the ear.

As the tramp collapsed, Lugano skillfully evaded the second bullet fired by the remaining assailant.

In that tense moment, passersby and elderly women chatting on the street scattered, desperately seeking cover. The surroundings seemed eerily vacant.

Shadows danced as Lumian emerged from the darkness beside the last assailant. Extending his right palm, he seized the other's neck.

Almost simultaneously, the assailant's mouth opened naturally, emitting a slender black shadow.

An insect, as thick as a finger, with tentacle-like bristles floating on its body, lunged straight for Lumian's neck.

"Hmph!"

Two pale-white beams of light flickered in Lumian's nostrils. The slender, peculiar black insect lost its strength, gently descending into his raised left palm.

As anticipated… Lumian withdrew his right hand from the tramp's neck, unfazed.

The tramp's eyes returned to normal. Clutching his revolver, he staggered backward, leaning against the wall before slumping to the ground in a daze.

Lumian paid him no heed. Utilizing the shadows, he swiftly approached an unconscious tramp, noticing a small, bloodless wound on the back of his cervical spine.

Another slender, bristle-covered black insect darted out, attempting escape. Lumian's hand, engulfed in crimson flames, seized it. After a few struggles, the insect emitted a cooked fragrance.

Subsequently, Lumian employed a similar method to handle the strange black insect emerging from another tramp's body.

During this procedure, Lugano half-squatted on the street, his left palm flickering with a clear light as he pressed it against the gunshot wound on his right rib.

The charred wound immediately contracted, ceasing to ooze blood.

Drawing a dagger, Lugano skillfully "picked" a yellow bullet from the wound with precision and efficacy.

With that accomplished, he generated a faint light in his left palm, pressing it against the wound.

The injury squirmed and swiftly fused, reducing to a fifth of its original size in no time.

Lugano had intentionally stretched, hoping the bullet would hit a spot he could conveniently handle!

As he retrieved a bandage to tend to the remaining wound, Lumian approached, extending his free right palm.

Understanding his employer's gesture, Lugano returned the Lie earring, expressing relief, "Fortunately, I'm a Doctor. As long as I'm not killed on the spot, gunshot wounds aren't a big deal."

Silently, Lumian donned the silver Lie earring. Leaning down, he pressed and swiped at Lugano's wound, transferring it to the back of his right hand.

Due to the disparity in location and Lugano's pre-treatment, the wound regressed into a small scrape—one akin to scraping against a rough wall.

"…" Lugano stared at the wound that didn't even require a bandage, falling into a prolonged silence.

Lumian smiled and remarked, "Why else do you think I let you carry Lie?"

"…" Lugano gaped, uncertain of what to say.

Surveying the area, Lumian instructed, "Take the three tramps' guns and wait for the police to arrive. Report that you were attacked.

"After giving your statement, if there's nothing else, take Ludwig to the Fertility Order's entrance and have them uphold justice and maintain order in Port Santa."

"Alright, alright." Lugano hurriedly stood up.

Just as he took two steps toward the dazed tramp, realization struck. He turned around and blurted, "What about you? Where are you going?"

In his haste, he had forgotten to use honorifics.

Lumian simply chuckled, saying nothing.

I sent you to the Fertility Order to inform them of my intentions—to let them know!

Lumian proceeded towards Solow Motel, leaving crimson flames in his wake that incinerated the blood dripped by Lugano.

As he advanced, Lumian lowered his voice and asked, "Temiboros, do you recognize these insects?"

Termiboros remained silent.

Upon reaching the suite on the fifth floor, Lumian observed Ludwig eagerly awaiting him.

His heart stirred as he spread his left palm, revealing three black insects. Casually, he inquired, "Do you know what these are?"

Ludwig nodded obediently, speaking swiftly, “Batings Black Insect, a creature from Planet Heveen 3. Rich in various proteins and possessing high energy levels. They invade human bodies via the cervical spine, controlling their nervous systems to manipulate them to their advantage.

“These Batings Black Insects ceased evolving generations ago. While controlling the nervous system, the host’s movements stiffen, and their eyes roll back.

“They seldom directly kill the host, but their larvae, once laid, absorb the host’s energy, indirectly leading to their demise.

“In ancient times, many of their ancestors received boons. Though their descendants no longer possess these, their body structures adapted to the boon’s power were inherited, eventually evolving into this special species with minor Beyonder-level powers.

“Consider it a special spirit world creature or a degenerated Beyonder creature.”

After the long explanation, Ludwig gazed at Lumian longingly, asking, “That’s all I have to say. Can I eat them now?”

You really know… You make it sound so real. The Batings Black Insect, Planet Heveen 3. What’s happening… The alien planets Aurore mentioned? Lumian was taken aback.

Lumian wasn’t surprised that Ludwig had the desire to consume the Batings Black Insects.

This guy could even gnaw on live rats!

The insects even emitted a rather pleasant fragrance after being roasted.

Lumian stared at Ludwig for a few seconds before handing over the three Batings Black Insects in his hand.

Ludwig didn’t hide his delight. He swiftly devoured two of the roasted insects, relishing the explosion of juices in his mouth.

He half-closed his eyes, and an unusual fluctuation seemed to surge within him.

Lumian furrowed his brow in confusion but refrained from intervening.

Having used the Mystery Prying Glasses to discover that there appeared to be something beneath Ludwig’s skin, coupled with Ludwig’s daily behavior and the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom’s stance, Lumian speculated that the boy was a monster in human guise, sealed by the Church to carry out tasks inconvenient for deploying clergymen.

Regarding the Reader pathway controlled by the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, it held various applications at the Body of Heart and Mind level. It

was reasonable to assume why Ludwig's mind had suffered damage after being sealed, rendering him seemingly foolish.

After 20 to 30 seconds, Ludwig opened his eyes and rushed to the dining table. Grabbing a small steel table knife, he carefully placed the remaining Batings Black Insect on the tablecloth and skillfully cut it open, removing numerous black fascias.

Ludwig poured a glass of Manzan and arranged the fascia and the shell of the Batings Black Insect on the table, adding the black juice squeezed from the insect's body.

Lumian observed as the pale-golden liquor swiftly transformed into a dark-

red, almost black hue, emitting dense bubbles.

Once the bubbles subsided, Ludwig lifted the peculiar cocktail.

Only then did he remember Lumian's presence. Stammering, he asked, "Can I

—can I drink a little?"

A sealed Body of Heart and Mind indeed… Lumian smiled and sighed.

"Drink up."

Gulp! Gulp! Ludwig finished the small amount of dark-red nearly black liquor and expressed satisfaction to Lumian, saying, "After concocting the Batings Black Insect's bodily fluids, it can enhance the physique of those who drink it for the first time to a certain extent. It grants everyone the ability to paralyze primate creatures within two hours. Yes, it will only be effective through contact."

Th-this is turning the Batings Black Insect into something akin to charms? Moreover, it provides permanent effects and short-term Beyonder powers… Amidst Lumian's surprise, he sensed that Ludwig had undergone significant changes.

He had never demonstrated the ability to prepare such food before!

Lumian didn't delve deeper and calmly remarked, "Take Lugano to the Fertility Order's entrance later and ensure he informs Noelia about the attack."

"Alright." In a good mood, Ludwig readily agreed.

…

Meanwhile at the port district—while Ludwig and Lugano arrived at the Fertility Order.

Wearing a golden straw hat, Lumian strolled towards the square dominated by an Ocean Waves statue. His attention focused on the grayish-black house adorned

with the Port Santa Fisheries Guild's sign.

The four- or five-story castle-like ancient structure was rumored to be over a millennium old, having been destroyed and rebuilt centuries ago.

Lumian's eyes traced the intricate symbols on the wall, which included iron hooks and fishing nets. Adjusting his straw hat, he proceeded towards the Fisheries Guild.

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Chapter 556 - 556 Violent Beating

556 Violent Beating

556 Violent Beating

Lugano gripped Ludwig's hand and raised his eyes to the green vines entwining the cloister's spire, with the Sacred Emblem of Life at its center. A simple depiction of a baby amidst wheat ears, flowers, spring water, and other symbols. Turning to Noelia, he uttered, "I was attacked. Just wrapped up my statement at the police station."

Noelia, adorned with a black hat adorned with white patterns, blending religion and combat, furrowed her brow and inquired, "Where's Louis Berry?"

Rather than delving into the specifics of Lugano's assault, she honed in on the whereabouts of Louis Berry, the great adventurer.

Lugano shook his head and replied earnestly, "I don't know. He told me to come here after giving my statement and inform you that I was attacked."

Noelia's expression shifted to solemnity.

…

In the bustling port district, standing before the robust grayish-black edifice of the Fisheries Guild,

Lumian, now garbed in a white shirt, black vest, and brown pants, topped with a golden straw hat, casually strode to the building.

The two guards stationed here lacked guns, carrying only straight swords on their backs and daggers at their waists, blending in with the multitude of passersby.

"Who are you looking for?" Both guards extended their hands simultaneously, halting Lumian's advance.

Lumian couldn't "comprehend" Highlander. Without hesitation, he drew his revolver, pointed it towards the sky, and squeezed the trigger.

Amidst the gunshot's echo, he slipped between the two guards, entering the castle-like abode of the Fisheries Guild.

The guards exchanged uncertain glances but refrained from intervening.

One of them dashed towards the port's police station, while the other hurried into the grayish-black building, aiming to report to his superior and seek guidance.

Clutching his revolver, Lumian advanced at a measured pace. Beneath the puzzled stares of the staff, who hastily sidestepped, he traversed the hall and ascended the stairs leading to the committee member's office.

Just as he approached the second floor, a figure appeared before him.

Bronze-hued skin, broad and sturdy physique, black hair, and blue eyes characterized the young man who had aided the Fisheries Guild's president, Juan Oro.

He was Fernandez Oro, the old man's grandson.

Fernandez glared at Lumian ascending step by step, gritting his teeth.

Lumian paid him no heed. He maintained a steady pace, neither hastening nor slowing as he approached the entrance to the second floor.

Suddenly, Lumian sensed a significant dimming of the ambient light.

Simultaneously, an intangible force descended from above, entwining around his feet, making him feel shorter and causing his body to sway. Fernandez, in contrast, seemed to grow taller, casting dense shadows that engulfed the corridor's meager light.

Thud!

Advancing, Fernandez swung his right fist towards Lumian's head.

A gusty wind permeated the space, propelling the fist with hammer-like force, guided by an unseen magnet.

Lumian gazed upward as something within him erupted, shattering the binding force.

His thighs swelled suddenly, and his loose brown pants constricted. He grew taller seemingly out of thin air, sleeves and pants tightening around bulging muscles.

Bang!

A left punch from Lumian met Fernandez's incoming fist in a thunderous collision, causing the stairs to quiver and sway.

Fernandez, forced back two steps, bore no fear but a hint of joy on his face.

Retreating, his eyes darkened with a touch of brilliance.

Raising his left hand, a dark-green light swiftly concentrated on his unusually rough fingertips.

The light transformed into a ray, silently hurtling towards Lumian, momentarily immobilized by the collision.

Fernandez chose close combat from the start, creating an opening for the ray, capable of disrupting the human structure and inducing swift internal injuries.

The dark-green danger ray matched the speed of light. Lumian, unable to dodge in advance, could only watch as it struck between his chest and abdomen.

Yet, the dark-green ray pierced through, striking only an illusion.

Leveraging the Ascetic's accumulated strength in clashing with Fernandez, Lumian had seized the chance to arch his back and stand in place like an arc, deftly evading potential sneak attacks.

In this intricate dance, he even employed the Niese Face, creating an illusion of himself still standing upright!

Gradually, the dark-green ray dissipated, vanishing around the corner of the stairs.

Suddenly, a crimson fire, nearly white-hot, erupted from Lumian's body.

Transformed into a fireball, he hurtled towards Fernandez, who had just regained his footing.

Fernandez's pupils constricted, seemingly challenged by the blaze.

Swiftly, he sidestepped, clenched his right hand into a fist, and yanked it down.

Clang!

His massive form stomped heavily, causing the building to sway. In a single stride, he stood before Fernandez, who had just risen. His left fist, wreathed in crimson, nearly white flames, collided with Fernandez.

Without a moment to activate his superpowers, Fernandez raised his arms hastily to block.

Boom!

Flames erupted as Lumian's punch sent the young man flying, crashing into the partially open side office, demolishing the wooden desk.

Capitalizing on Fernandez's disorientation and pain, Lumian followed, rushing into the office and delivering another punch with his left fist.

Boom! Crimson flames, nearly white, illuminated the room as the punch explosively struck Fernandez's chest.

The flames were contained by an unseen force, preventing them from entirely obliterating Fernandez's chest. Instead, they crumpled, clouding the target's vision.

Expressionless, Lumian halted, gazing at the semi-conscious Fernandez. He raised his left hand.

A colossal crimson fireball, nearly white, condensed rapidly, poised to act as a Reaper.

In the next instant, the fireball shot forth, homing in on Fernandez.

Abruptly, it ascended, passing the target, and collided with the wall behind the desk.

Boom!

Blazing white and red flames burst through the glass window, the wall, and ignited outside the Fisheries Guild building, creating fiery clouds in the air.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian felt as though he entered a dark and profound void. Distant, resplendent stars blinked like vigilant eyes.

Once more, he confronted Juan Oro, an elderly man with deeply etched wrinkles.

At that moment, Noelia had rushed to the square where the statue of the waves stood, shouting towards the building with a fallen window frame,

"Stop!"

At the sound of the combat nun's voice, Lumian sighed with regret, swiveled his revolver, and holstered it under his armpit. Juan Oro and the surrounding void vanished.

A few minutes later, Juan Oro emerged from the grayish-black building of the Fisheries Guild with his walking stick. In a deep voice, he addressed Noelia, "He attacked Fernandez. You must apprehend him!"

Noelia cast a cold glance at the president of the Fisheries Guild and retorted, "Should I then invite Fernandez to the police station to assist in the investigation of the Aquina Street shooting?

"All of you, calm down and jointly maintain order in Port Santa. Otherwise, do you think the Church can't handle any of you?"

In the final words, the combat nun shifted her gaze to Lumian, issuing a warning as a gesture of fairness.

Juan Oro fell silent for a moment before stating, “I don’t know anything about the Aquina Street shooting.”

With that, he turned and limped back to the Fisheries Guild with his cane, where many employees rushed to assist him.

Observing this, Noelia led her combat team to “escort” Lumian away.

Once out of the port district, the combat nun instructed her team members to slow down and create some distance, walking alongside Lumian herself.

“You’re making things difficult for us. Order, understand? Superficial order must be maintained.” Noelia raised her hand, pinching both sides of her forehead. “Fortunately, you didn’t really kill Fernandez. Otherwise, I would have had no choice but to carry out the arrest.”

Lumian chuckled and remarked, “If I truly wanted to kill Fernandez, he wouldn’t have survived until your intervention or Juan Oro’s rescue.”

His words held undeniable truth.

Noelia was taken aback. After a few seconds of contemplation, she spoke, “Are you displaying your attitude, strength, and confidence for the onlookers? Simultaneously, do you wish for Juan Oro to misjudge your capabilities based on this encounter?”

Lumian remained silent. With a smile, he looked ahead and remarked, “Where did the former Governors of the Sea end up?”

Noelia fell silent for a moment before answering, “On the surface, they were dispatched to various locations. However, according to our observations, it takes at least four to five months, or no more than three years, for these Governors of the Sea to mysteriously vanish without a trace. There are often no signs of a struggle at the scene, and their families remain unharmed.”

Did they return to the sea voluntarily? Lumian smiled and said, “See, didn’t I gain something from dealing with Fernandez just now?”

The Church of Earth Mother now seemed more willing to share information.

Noelia wasn’t upset. She smiled and added, “No one reveals all their cards from the start. Once your investigation reaches a certain point, we’ll provide more.”

Lumian stared at the azure sea beside him, contemplating for a moment.

“You haven’t disclosed the intentions of your Earth Mother Church in this matter.”

Noelia’s eyes flickered. Suddenly, she raised her hand and pointed at the arguing pedestrians ahead, shouting, “Street brawls are prohibited!”

Before completing her sentence, she sprinted over with her team, leaving Lumian alone.

Lumian scoffed and slowly shook his head.

…

Late at night, as Lumian was about to retire for the night, he heard the deep and hoarse voice of the Knight of Swords, as if suppressing something.

“Clues to the whereabouts of the two targets have been found.”

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Chapter 557 - 557 Purpose

557 Purpose

557 Purpose

Trusting his gut, he turned, meeting his reflection in the full-length mirror.

There stood the disheveled, pallid-faced Knight of Swords, a sudden appearance.

“Just clues?” Lumian mused, distilling the essence of the other’s words.

The Knight of Swords shot him a gaze, tightly reined, and uttered, “The day after hitting Port Santa, they visited Balan?at Ship Rental, asking about renting a boat for fishing. Vanished since.”

Those words sparked a fleeting thought in Lumian’s mind.

Quite romantic. As expected of a three-halves Intisian and half-

Feynapotterian duo. Opting for a fishing date!

If only Nolfi didn’t carry the Maiden of the Sea’s lineage and this wasn’t Port Santa; then, romance might’ve been their motive. Regrettably, reality doesn’t entertain “ifs.” Lumian sighed, pondering Nolfi and Batna’s true intentions.

Port Santa teemed with fishermen, yet not all owned boats. The lower-class ones either worked on vessels for a set pay or pooled funds to rent or buy. Balan?at’s profits came from these folks, not the tourists or middle-class sightseers. This wasn’t a city known for tourism.

In Lumian’s contemplation, the Knight of Swords pressed on, “Nolfi handled the price inquiry, but Batna cooperated without resistance.”

Did Batna truly perceive it as a date? For Intisians, it holds allure. No wonder he didn’t resist. Renting a boat for a sea excursion… Lumian pondered, his mind racing with possibilities. Was Nolfi planning to intercept the incoming Governor of the Sea during the sea prayer ritual or collide with their ship loaded with gunpowder? Perhaps she intended to replace them at a critical juncture? Lumian’s thoughts whirred with conjectures.

Then, a sudden recollection jolted him.

Various sources mentioned a crucial detail about the sea prayer ritual: The final and pivotal part unfolded in a special sea area beyond the port. Details and the

location were undisclosed to those who hadn't witnessed it.

A new hypothesis formed in Lumian's mind.

Nolfi's mother, a fleeing Maiden of the Sea, likely visited that special sea and might have shared pertinent information with her daughter.

Was Nolfi's motive for renting the boat to reach that unique sea area?

What lay there?

The core of the sea prayer ritual. Did this imply something, an entity, or power concealed in that zone? Was the ritual designed to harness something extraordinary?

Did Nolfi aim to seize the item and establish herself as the permanent Governor of the Sea? Or did she intend to obliterate it, terminating Port Santa's tradition of selecting the Governor and Maidens through the sea prayer ritual?

Destruction might indeed be the simpler route…

Could April Fool's key members have orchestrated a prank to steal the item or its uniqueness?

Had they succeeded?

This was a pivotal question.

The Knight of Swords observed Lumian in silence, not disrupting his contemplation. He stood motionless, resembling a lifeless figure.

After a while, Lumian asked with curiosity, "How did you manage to trace Nolfi and Batna in just one day?"

The Knight of Swords, in a deep tone, responded, "Gathering information from the spirit world and conducting a field investigation. After their departure from the Balan?at Ship Rental, all pertinent information was either concealed or eliminated, making it impossible to locate them again."

Isn't this the premise of certain divinations… Nolfi and Batna didn't take precautions against divination before visiting the ship rental company, but they did so afterward?

This doesn't add up. Either they never take precautions, or they do it consistently, unless they are both novices who only remember to guard against divination after inquiring about the boat's price…

Yes, a more plausible explanation is that ship rental falls within the fisheries and sea trade-related industries, deeply intertwined with the committee members of the Fisheries Guild. Nolfi and Batna, as outsiders, inquiring about the price of a ship rental attracted attention, and their identities were exposed, leading to their

“disappearance”…

The note revealing that Nolfi is the child of the Maidens of the Sea might come from the owner or a shareholder of the Balan?at Ship Rental? Lumian’s thoughts gradually became clearer.

He gazed at the Knight of Swords, pondering how to request him to continue the investigation.

At that moment, the Knight of Swords took the initiative to say, “I’ll delve deeper into the ship rental company.”

“Thank you,” Lumian expressed his gratitude sincerely.

Then, he witnessed the Knight of Swords’s figure swiftly becoming transparent and vanishing.

Transformed into a soul-like entity? Wraith? Lumian discerned more details this time.

This led him to suspect that the Knight of Swords belonged to the temperance faction of the Church of The Fool. His subsequent journey to the Southern Continent was likely to deal with the indulgence faction of the Rose School of Thought.

Without hesitation, he shed his clothes, donned a faded cotton shirt, and reclined on the bed.

…

Late at night in Trier, Franca strolled beneath intermittently-lit street lamps, clad in a thick tweed shirt and pants that clung to her legs.

Even without makeup and deliberately concealing her appearance in the darkness and shadows, numerous inebriated individuals still approached her upon glimpsing her back or side profile, behaving like tiny flying insects circling under the gas street lamps on a summer’s night.

Smack!

Franca’s ponytail swayed slightly as she sent a particular drunkard flying with a sidekick.

The drunkard screamed and vomited on the ground.

However, those scoundrels came expecting joy and anticipation, only to receive a beating and the accompanying pain. Right, could this be considered a simplified version of pleasure causing affliction?

It was precisely because Franca wanted to experience this and potentially find an opportunity to digest the potion that she didn’t sneak through the shadows and

move undetected.

After a while, Franca slipped into the shadows and reached the empty room where she had previously met 007.

Her associate had mentioned that he'd discovered information about the ancient tomb beside the Crazy Mushroom Cave on the fourth level of the catacombs through the Church's resources and municipal archives. However, it wasn't safe to disclose it in the telegram group, no matter how close their bonds were. Therefore, he compiled the details and left them at the designated spot for Franca to retrieve.

Franca conducted a brief search and found two folded sheets of thin paper.

She unfolded them and swiftly skimmed the content. As an Assassin, even in the dimmest environment, she could decipher the words:

"The ancient tomb where you found the Mirror World Fragment belongs to a noble family from the Fourth Epoch's Tudor Empire.

"Their last name is Tamara. I haven't located specific details about the members in that tomb, but I've stumbled upon something odd.

"Not only does the fourth level house Tamara family tombs, but there are also tombs on the third level, such as the Thorns and Shieldwall Tomb and the Impartial Tomb. Why aren't they grouped together…"

Franca's gaze froze.

Isn't the Thorns and Shieldwall Tomb where Jenna completed her tearcatcher mission?

The mission they used as a pretext involved the Tamara family, and the tomb where they found the Mirror World Fragment belonged to them too!

Wasn't this an extraordinary coincidence?

Could it be a manifestation of mystical laws?

Franca collected herself and continued reading.

"…I can't access more detailed Tamara family information at my level. Figure something out yourself."

Hmm… Franca nodded, resolved to report the entire situation to Madam Judgment, seeking insights and information from the Tarot Club.

…

In the early morning, on Aquina Street in Port Santa.

In a house diagonally opposite Solow Motel, Lumian, his appearance transformed, stood by a window in a room. Clutching the new ID provided by Valerio, he surveyed the suite where he, Lugano, and Ludwig were lodged, as well as the street below.

Now, he aimed to play the role of an ordinary bounty hunter who had taken on a confidential assignment, diligently monitoring the adventurer, Louis Berry.

Given Louis's assertive conduct in recent days, it was likely that all the well-

informed individuals in Port Santa knew of this great adventurer's desire to investigate the sea prayer ritual. The probability was high that Bard and other pivotal members of April Fool's would be in tow!

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Chapter 558 - 558 Tamara Family

558 Tamara Family

Lumian savored the tang of fermented grape juice bought from a street vendor as he coolly surveyed the suite rented by the adventurer, Louis Berry. He occasionally cast a discerning eye over Aquina Street, on the lookout for any potential monitors.

A little over half an hour ago, Lumian had transformed his appearance and changed into a different outfit. He had seemingly “teleported” to a nearby street before returning to secure a suitable room.

Soon enough, Lumian spotted Lugano cautiously heading out to fetch an extra breakfast for Ludwig. A chuckle escaped him.

This guy was still spooked from yesterday’s attack.

However, unless the members of the Fisheries Guild had succumbed to the corrupting influence of superpowers, losing control of their emotions and rational thinking, it was improbable for them to target Lugano, the interpreter and guide. Louis Berry’s response the previous day had sent a clear message to everyone:

If you can’t take me out directly, keep your sights off those around me. You might eliminate me, but I, Louis Berry, can do the same. There’ll come a time when your Fisheries Guild’s committee members, your kids, and descendants travel without protection or lack strength. Wanna guess if I’d dare to make a move or if I have the capability?

Either find an opportunity to bring me down with all you’ve got, or play nice!

Faced with such a resolute “answer,” the rational committee members of the Fisheries Guild would know what to do. Louis Berry, the adventurer, wasn’t bound by official rules like a Beyonder or a cop. Expecting him not to involve family in the game was unrealistic.

Moreover, considering his recent behavior and the circulating rumors, he was a daring adventurer, reminiscent of Gehrman Sparrow. Known for his aggression, madness, and coldness, there were no limits to what such a person might do.

Of course, Lumian wasn’t letting his guard down entirely. Lugano would either have Ludwig’s “company” in the future, or he’d be under Lumian’s watchful eye at all times. After all, beyond the Fisheries Guild, many individuals in Port Santa were secretly plotting to exploit this opportunity for their own gain. Disguised as Fisheries Guild members, they could attack the interpreter and godson of the

adventurer Louis Berry, intensifying the conflict and stirring up trouble prematurely.

Ignoring conspiracies at this level would be unacceptable for a Conspirer.

After Lugano returned to his suite on the fifth floor of Solow Motel with a heap of breakfast, Lumian purposefully avoided looking at the high-backed chair, seemingly adorned with a golden straw hat, positioned strategically at the dining table. He turned on his heel and exited the room, ready to explore the surroundings.

Stepping into the corridor, Lumian immediately spotted a burly man standing near the staircase, barely reaching 1.7 meters in height.

The man, with brown hair, brown eyes, and rugged skin, held a distinctive long mouth cigarette between his lips, fixing his gaze on Lumian.

In Highlander, the man inquired, “Who sent you here to keep an eye on Louis Berry?”

Lumian couldn’t help but let out a soft chuckle.

“Are you not here to monitor Louis Berry yourself?

“I didn’t even inquire about your sender. Why the sudden curiosity?”

He responded in flawless Highlander as well.

The man, with the long mouth cigarette dangling, contemplated for a moment before nodding in agreement, making way for the stairs.

Lumian strolled past him, descending the staircase step by step.

As he departed, the man’s gaze took on a gradually ominous edge.

He raised his left hand, delicately twisting the special long mouth cigarette.

Taking a deep breath, he exhaled into the cigarette, and in silence, a slender steel needle shot forth from the charred tobacco, aimed directly at Lumian’s back, mere two meters away.

It was a blow dart, originating from certain tribes in the primitive forests of the Southern Continent. Typically, blow darts were one to two meters long, making them unsuitable for concealment or sneak attacks. However, bounty hunters, followers of the God of Steam and Machinery with strong hands, modified them into a more portable version—only slightly longer than regular cigarettes.

While this modification increased portability and its concealed nature, it sacrificed some power and limited its range to a mere four to five meters. When paired with specially crafted arrows carrying anesthetic and lethal toxins, it remained a favored tool among bounty hunters on both Northern and Southern Continents.

The man had concealed the blow dart within the long mouth cigarette, intending to lull the target and strike when the opportune moment arrived.

His objective: to subdue Lumian and extract information about the identity of his employer.

The steel needle flashed past, but Lumian seemed to have anticipated the attack. Just as the man blew air to propel the needle, Lumian swiftly bent forward, arched his spine, and dodged the blow dart in an almost inhuman contortion.

With a soft poof, the steel needle embedded itself into the wooden staircase.

In the next moment, the assailant's eyes widened as Lumian, in a display of flexibility surpassing human limits, swung a boxing glove.

Bang!

He fainted.

Swiftly recovering from his contorted evasion, Lumian bent down, scooped up the unconscious assailant, and dragged him into his rented room.

Taking advantage of the assailant's unconscious state, Lumian administered a dose of truth serum and calculated the time for him to regain consciousness.

Examining the unremarkable, ordinary face of his assailant, Lumian calmly listened to the panicked shout.

"I just wanted to incapacitate you and find a spot to interrogate you about your employer!

"The poison on the arrow is just an anesthetic!"

Squatting in front of the man, Lumian smiled and responded, "Now, let me ask you, who's your employer?"

"It's Juan Oro!" the brown-haired, brown-eyed man blurted out.

Lumian chuckled and probed further, "Is that so?"

"Yes, no, it's actually someone else…" At this point, horror overcame the man, and he fell silent.

Lumian prompted him patiently.

"Who is it?"

After struggling for a few seconds, the man involuntarily spoke,

"Rubió Paco."

Rubió… Why is he keeping tabs on me? Does he seek to gain from the adventurer's activities? Is that why he didn't approach me discreetly to share information? Lumian nodded subtly and straightened up.

"Your breath stinks. Remember to brush your teeth more often."

"…" The assailant looked perplexed, unable to fathom why the conversation had taken this turn. Nonetheless, he replied half-heartedly, "I'm not a fan of brushing my teeth."

Lumian shook his head in disdain, uninterested in the blow dart as a trophy. Leaving the room, he left a parting message: "Make sure to lock the door behind me."

…

In Trier, within Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Franca and Jenna's rented apartment.

They had already received Madam Judgment's response via Rabbit Chasel.

Before departing, Rabbit Chasel, adorned with a miniature top hat, shrunken gold-rimmed glasses, and a diminutive black trench coat, made an unusual request.

"Can I use a custom-made revolver as compensation for delivering the next five letters?"

Jenna's mouth hung open, momentarily taken aback.

"Sure."

She questioned, "Why can't you conjure one yourself?"

Similar to your top hat, glasses, and trench coat.

"They have no practical use, but I hope the revolver does. The bullets need to be custom-made too," Rabbit Chasel explained earnestly.

Jenna blinked and acquiesced.

Once the messenger departed, Franca commented with a peculiar expression,

"Why does it feel like it has shifted from pursuing knowledge to pursuing strength?"

Jenna wanted to defend Rabbit Chasel but struggled to find a compelling excuse. Instead, she cursed, "It's not necessarily a bad thing. It might even aid me in future battles!

"Moreover, the stronger the messenger, the safer the letter deliveries."

Franca, lacking a messenger, suddenly felt a twinge of envy. Without delay, she unfolded Madam Judgment's reply.

"The Tamara family, one of the five noble families from the Fourth Epoch's Tudor Empire, held a hereditary duke aristocratic title, akin to the Amon you're familiar with, albeit slightly lower in status.

"In the era when the gods roamed the land, families capable of becoming great nobles undoubtedly possessed angelic powers. According to the information, the Tamara family had existed for many years before Alista Tudor became the Blood Emperor. They were renowned nobles from the previous empire.

"They had the coat of arms changed once and two internal divisions. This is why Tamara was buried on different levels of the catacombs at different times.

"Initially, their coat of arms consisted of thorns, a shieldwall, and vertical swords. Later, it became an open door, with the vertical sword acting as the crack.

"This represents a significant change in the Tamara family. It shifted from being dominated by the Justiciar pathway to being dominated by the Apprentice pathway. However, no corresponding historical information has appeared for the time being.

"A small number of members of the Tamara family, who adhere to the Judgment pathway, have survived to this day and are secretly active.

"The other Tamara group had established a close connection with the Demoness family during the Tudor Empire's era. During the Fifth Epoch, a secret organization known as the Theosophy Order emerged. It had Demoness figures and originated from Tamara's Apprentice pathway. There's reason to believe that they are still cooperating.

"This Tamara group has been estranged from the other one for many years, refusing to acknowledge each other.

"The Tamaras of the Judgment pathway also experienced a division. The exact situation is unknown…"

Upon reading this, Franca and Jenna shared the same thought.

The Tamara family is indeed connected to the Demonesses!

They continued reading the contents of the letter.

"The person who led you to the Tamara family's tomb and discovered the Mirror World Fragment is likely targeting that special mirror world and the Demoness Sect. Don't worry for the time being. Just be vigilant against coincidences, theft, and scams around you…"

…

In the ensuing days, Lumian, along with Lugano and Ludwig, remained unharmed.

Port Santa seemed to settle back into a semblance of normalcy. Those secretly observing displayed no indications of advancing further.

Just as Lumian contemplated taking further actions to elucidate all details before the sea prayer ritual in early November, the Knight of Swords brought fresh information regarding Nolfi and Batna.

His face maintaining a pale-white hue, he spoke to Lumian, “I’ve identified a suspect involved in the kidnapping of the two targets. Should I handle it alone, or shall we proceed together?”

Lumian took a moment to consider before responding, “Together.”

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Chapter 559 - 559 Top-Notch Collaborator

559 Top-Notch Collaborator

559 Top-Notch Collaborator

After making his decision, Lumian had a chance to inquire, “Who’s the suspect?”

“Lato Guiaro,” the Knight of Swords announced.

Lumian recognized this individual. He was also a committee member of the Fisheries Guild. Not only did he own shares in three large fishing boats and the Port Santa Fisheries Company, but he was also involved in shipbuilding, ice production, and other industries. Someone in his family had already married a Maiden of the Sea over a hundred years ago.

Lumian asked thoughtfully, “What’s Lato Guiaro’s connection to Balan?at Ship Rental?”

“He’s a creditor of the company and has arranged employment for many relatives there,” the Knight of Swords replied succinctly.

“It all adds up.” Lumian nodded in agreement and paused to reflect. “Let’s convene at the crossroads of Saint Lana Street and Golden Wheat Street. How about meeting in three minutes?”

He had never set foot in Lato Guiaro’s extended family estate, so he lacked the corresponding spirit world coordinates. His only teleportation option was Saint Lana Street, relatively close to their target. He needed to utilize Spirit World Traversal discreetly to evade any surveillance.

“Sure.” The Knight of Swords dissolved into transparency and disappeared instantly.

Lumian spent two minutes hydrating, donning a vest and a straw hat. Only then did the faint glow of the black mark on his right shoulder illuminate.

In an instant, his figure vanished from the shrouded room.

At the crossroads of Saint Lana Street and Golden Wheat Street, Lumian materialized from a concealed corner. The Knight of Swords, now sporting disheveled brown hair, a switched flaxen-colored shirt, and a dark brown vest, stood at the fringe of the crimson moonlight. His pallid face and oppressive eyes

hinted at an underlying transformation, as if he could shed his human guise at any moment, revealing a monstrous form fueled by pent-

up desires.

While others might miss these subtleties, Lumian, being an Ascetic, possessed a heightened sensitivity to such situations.

The temperance faction, indeed… Lumian mused at the Knight of Swords's appearance, entertaining a whimsical thought.

Bro, ever considered embracing Inevitability? As an Alms Monk or an Ascetic, you'd spare yourself from enduring so much!

Of course, Lumian merely toyed with the idea and wouldn't actually propose it. Without the right strokes of luck, the boon of an evil god could gradually corrupt Beyonders within the potion system, eventually transforming them into humanoid monsters aligned with the evil deity. Nevertheless, his musings hinted at the potential synergy between specific Sequences of the boon system and potion system.

"Let's proceed." As the Knight of Swords remained silent, Lumian took the lead and spoke.

The Knight of Swords nodded, and they followed the shadows along the street, turning into Golden Wheat Street at a measured pace, heading north.

Soon, they reached a five-story building resembling a small castle.

Observing the illuminated windows and grayish-blue outer walls, the Knight of Swords pointed at a specific glass pane, noting,

"That's Lato's bedroom. He and his wife sleep in separate rooms."

The gathered intelligence is impressively detailed… Lumian acknowledged silently and inquired, "What's your plan?"

"Sneak in and take control of the target," the Knight of Swords responded succinctly.

Isn't that a bit too straightforward and crude? The Guiaro family likely employs more than just ordinary Beyonders. Some members may have gained powers through the sea prayer ritual… Lumian recalled the unique characteristics of a Wraith and assessed his capabilities. With one hand in his pocket, he casually remarked, "Okay."

With those words, his form dissolved into a shadow, seamlessly merging with the darkness.

Beside him, the Knight of Swords had already vanished.

Utilizing the shadows cast on the building's outer wall, Lumian deftly infiltrated Lato Guiaro's room.

In an instant, his target came into view.

A middle-aged man, with slightly curly black hair and dark brown eyes, adorned in a dark-blue cotton robe, greeted Lumian's sight. His long face featured a neatly trimmed thick beard.

Lato Guiaro's expression morphed into one of fear, and his body froze. He stumbled toward the shadow concealing Lumian.

In the reflection within each eye of the Fisheries Guild committee member, Lumian spotted the pale-faced Knight of Swords, clad in a dark brown vest and flaxen-colored shirt, with disheveled brown hair!

Observing Lato Guiaro losing control of his body, unable to utter a sound, Lumian stepped out of the shadow, returning to his original form.

An oppressive heaviness enveloped the air around him, akin to the weight of seawater.

Apart from this, nothing seemed amiss.

With a controlled step, Lumian approached Lato Guiaro, a sensation akin to moving through a swamp.

He refrained from resorting to the direct use of the Spell of Harrumph. Firstly, the other party seemed powerless and could be managed through alternative means, saving his spiritual energy. Secondly, Lumian hesitated due to uncertainty about whether the Spell of Harrumph would incapacitate both of them, given the forceful possession of Lato Guiaro by the Knight of Swords.

Retrieving a bottle of sedative from the Bliss Society, Lumian unscrewed the cap and brought it to Lato Guiaro's nose.

Fanning the opening with his hand to hasten the gas's flow, after about ten seconds, the committee member of the Fisheries Guild closed his eyes and slumped into unconsciousness.

Remarkably, he remained standing, not collapsing to the ground.

The Tarot Club's Minor Arcana card holder, the Knight of Swords, maintained absolute control over Lato Guiaro's body.

This is even simpler than employing teleportation and the Spell of Harrumph… I've faced numerous Beyonders before, but never have I subdued one without laying a hand on them. I strolled up casually, administering the sedative. A Wraith truly stands as an exceptional ally, capable of harmonizing with any Sequence of any pathway… Yes, a Wraith remains impervious to anesthetic gasses. The Bliss

Society's sedative had no effect on him. As Lumian observed the noiseless resolution, he almost felt as if he hadn't partaken in the skirmish at all.

He returned the Bliss Society sedative to his concealed pocket and retrieved a canister of truth serum. Seizing the moment, he administered nearly a third of it to Lato Guiaro. Sensing that the sedative's impact might be short-lived on Beyonders with unknown traits like Lato Guiaro, he hastened to complete his preparations before the target regained consciousness.

Within 20 to 30 seconds, Lato Guiaro's eyes fluttered open.

First, he encountered Louis Berry, the adventurer in the golden straw hat, adorned with a faint smile. Subsequently, he discovered himself seated on a chair at some indeterminate moment, facing the divan in the bedroom.

Lato attempted to scream, but his vocal cords rebelled, rendering him motionless.

"Have you grasped your situation?" Lumian reclined on the sofa, placing his right foot on his left knee.

He spoke in Intisian.

Fear etched across Lato's face, rendering him unable to nod or respond.

While he possessed certain abilities, Lato was certain they wouldn't suffice against the adventurer Louis Berry. They would likely result in a renewed coma or a swift lightning strike.

"What do you want?" Lato suddenly inquired.

He, too, knew Intisian.

Attempting to raise his hand in surprise to touch his neck, he found himself immobilized.

Lato Guiaro lapsed into silence.

With a smile, Lumian responded, "I have a few questions for you. Answer them satisfactorily, and I might consider letting you live until tomorrow to assist me in spreading the word about this affair."

Lato remained silent for a moment before consenting, "What do you want to know?"

Lumian casually shook his right ankle.

"Are Nolfi and Batna with you?"

"Yes," Lato responded with a strong inclination to divulge information. "They're locked up in the basement. They're still alive. I just want to use them."

“For what?” Lumian inquired, intrigued.

Lato’s lips trembled as he explained, “I intend to use them to lead you to the location of the sea sacrificial ritual and guide you to rent a boat there.”

“So, you’re the one who wrote that note…” Lumian exclaimed in realization. “How do you plan to guide me?”

Lato struggled to articulate his actions, but his mouth moved faster than his thoughts.

“I want you to discover that Nolfi and the Batna intend to rent a boat and head out to sea. Then, I’ll arrange for them to seize an opportunity to escape and relay something to you, letting you know the significance of the sea area.”

“And then?” Lumian inquired with curiosity.

Lato sealed his lips shut but eventually spoke.

“What they will tell you is the truth, but they are unaware of one thing: “Never engage a Child of the Sea in a sea battle! Juan Oro awaits you in that sea region, ready to bury you entirely!”

So, the Fisheries Guild planted a deceptive trail through the clue about Nolfi, posing as a turncoat to lure me into a trap and eliminate me… If I hadn’t swiftly revealed my intent to investigate the sea prayer ritual, exposing Nolfi and Batna to exploitation, they might already be sleeping with the fishes… The skirmish against Lugano was crafted to deceive me… As Lumian’s thoughts raced, he heard Lato express confusion, “You haven’t even started your investigation. How did you find me? You merely sent your interpreter to inquire about Nolfi and the others’ whereabouts. There was no follow-up…”

Lumian’s smile held a cryptic undertone as he disclosed, “Do you think I’m here alone to investigate the sea prayer ritual?

“I represent the will of many. Numerous comrades lurk in the shadows of Port Santa.”

Lato felt a chill course through his stiffened body, lending credence to Lumian’s words.

Lumian raised his right hand and stroked his chin.

“Where does your power come from?”

Lato’s throat constricted as he answered, “From the sea. Each sea prayer ritual grants us strength.

“Unfortunately, the ritual failed last year. We received no replenishment for two years, and everyone weakened to varying degrees. Otherwise, Juan Oro would

have finished you long ago. He would have cast your lifeless form into Wave Square, a stark warning to those who cross us!”

Similar to a boon? Theoretically, even without replenishment, a boon’s power will gradually wane… Lumian pondered for a moment and remarked,

“The sea prayer ritual is a large-scale boon-seeking ritual, with the Governor of the Sea as the primary sacrifice?”

Lato contemplated for a moment before responding,”He serves as both sacrifice and host. Juan Oro and we act as assistant hosts.

“The sea prayer ritual is essentially a marriage to the sea and appeasing it. The boon is a byproduct.”

“Marriage to the sea?” Lumian suddenly found his imagination lacking.

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Chapter 560 - 560 Traces

560 Traces

Lato rarely divulged details about the sea prayer ritual. He spoke with a weighty demeanor, “Yes, the Governor of the Sea ties the knot with the sea, quelling its violence and bringing peace. They truly become the spouse of the sea, commanding authority over this stretch of water.

“As the assistant and deputy hosts, we also gain varying degrees of in Port Santa receive some boons, although they are limited in number.”

So, the Governor of the Sea is synonymous with Husband of the Sea. The assistant and deputy hosts are like close friends or family busy assisting at a wedding, naturally earning gratitude. Those with the sea bloodline are akin to children attending a wedding, typically gaining some candy… Lumian attempted to comprehend Lato Guiaro’s description of the sea prayer ritual by combining reality and wedding traditions in novels.

Intrigued, he inquired, “Does the Governor of the Sea engage in those acts with the sea?”

Aren’t weddings supposed to conclude with newlyweds consummating their marriage?

“Of course!” Lato affirmed, “After the wedding, the sea will bind itself to the four Maidens of the Sea. Through their union with the Governor of the Sea, the first child of each Maiden of the Sea is a noble with a pure sea bloodline, possessing the strongest Beyonder powers.

“Why four and not one Maiden of the Sea? It’s because individual humans can’t endure the vastness, expansiveness, weight, and transcendence of the sea. Enough partners are needed to share the burden.”

The more I listen, the more ominous it becomes… Marrying a Maiden of the Sea is akin to marrying a remnant of the sea’s power. It’s no wonder they’re highly valued, and their destinies change. The only challenge is acknowledging and loving their wife’s first child. Lumian contemplated for a moment and remarked, “And the Governor of the Sea can withstand the passion of the sea?”

And it was four at a time.

Lato, devoid of pity or sympathy, stated, “One of the two most crucial purposes of the vigil ritual is to utilize the house and some of the sea spawn concealed within it to transform the Governor of the Sea’s body, enabling them to withstand the

violent and unrestrained sea.

“That’s why the Governor of the Sea can only serve for a year. Even with the physical transformation, the power acquisition, and the Beyonder enhancement, they won’t endure much longer.”

Consumable. The husband of the sea is a consumable… Lumian sighed inwardly and queried, “Then why would the Governor of the Sea return to the sea after leaving office?”

“No one knows the exact reason, but there’s a certain conjecture. Juan Oro believes that the sea doesn’t allow those who were once its husband to start a new life. And I believe that the modifications of the vigil ritual, the intrusion of spousal intercourse, and the influence of maritime authority make the Governor of the Sea more and more like a sea creature and less human. Eventually, he will inevitably return to the sea that gives him peace and comfort.” Lato felt that his deduction was correct.

What exactly is the sea you’re referring to? Is it a natural spirit or a creature beyond, controlling the sea? Lumian replayed Lato Guiaro’s answers in his mind before asking, “Sea spawn? Like the wrinkled monsters that can disguise themselves as devils, and the long black insects that control humans by burrowing into their necks?”

“Yes,” Lato responded, yearning for a cigarette but unable to move his hands. “We, the Children of the Sea, are spawn of the sea. One of our duties is guiding certain sea spawn from the depths to settle on land using our Beyonder powers, helping them reproduce.”

However, Ludwig mentioned that the Batings Black Insects originate from another planet, not some sea spawn… Lumian didn’t rush to ask about the Children of the Sea’s Beyonder powers; instead, he focused on the details of the sea prayer ritual.

“What’s the other vital purpose of the vigil?”

Lato’s expression hinted: “Don’t you understand what weddings are about?”

“Well, there’s the exchange of rings for marriage. And the vigil ritual modifies the Governor of the Sea’s body, attaching a unique trait to a fixed golden ring, matching it to the sea bride’s identity.”

A unique golden ring… Lumian perked up and said, “And then?”

During last year’s April Fool’s prank, fringe members received orders to acquire a gold ring from Torres and conceal it within the lamb sacrifice’s stomach!

“Then, following the completion of the other rituals, the Governor of the Sea will take the golden ring and cast it directly into the sea before the ship. He will utter in a unique language from the depths,

‘We espouse thee, O sea, as a sign of true and perpetual dominion!’

“If the sea consents to this union, gentle waves will stir, transforming into pure white foam petals that will shower over the four Maidens of the Sea.

“The returned ring carries symbolic weight, signifying authority over the waters surrounding Port Santa[1].”

Just the waters encompassing Port Santa? From the indications, it seems it’s not the true sea, but rather something that affects this specific area of the waters… Lumian paused briefly before speaking, “How do you express ‘We espouse thee, O sea…’ in that peculiar language?”

Lato Guiaro contemplated for a moment before emitting a chattering sound.

Under the influence of the Language Comprehension charms, Lumian failed to grasp its meaning. He concluded it wasn’t part of the Northern Continent’s languages.

Simultaneously, he observed the Knight of Swords in Lato’s eyes slightly shaking his head.

If the Knight of Swords truly belongs to the temperance faction that parted ways from the Rose School of Thought to align with the Church of The Fool, he should possess knowledge of the Southern Continent’s language. Additionally, with his high Sequence and extensive tenure as a Beyonder, he must have encountered most supernatural tongues. Does this imply it’s not from the language family of the Southern Continent, let alone ancient Hermes, Dragonese, Elvish, or other mystical languages? Lumian regarded Lato Guiaro with an intrigued grin.

“Are you certain those words translate to ‘We espouse thee, O sea…’?”

Lato hesitated briefly before explaining, “Probably. This is a language passed down from ancient times, existing since the sea prayer ritual. There are only a few sentences…”

He’s not sure… They hadn’t systematically mastered the language, only capable of uttering two or three sentences based on the legacy… Lumian sensed there might be more to it than Lato’s description; there was no denial if the true meaning was akin to “Open Sesame.”

The folks from the Fisheries Guild and Milo Village might have been akin to the individuals Aurore and Franca spoke of. They employed a peculiar language, its true meaning eluding them as they substituted it with their own interpretation.

As Lumian pondered, his expression remained unchanged.

“Does the Governor of the Sea safeguard the ring after he acquires the special trait?”

“No,” Lato responded, shaking his head. “In addition to the Governor of the Sea, the Maidens of the Sea, and sailors in charge of controlling the ship, there are four

pure-blooded Children of the Sea acting as deputy hosts. They guide the Governor and the Maidens through the ritual stages, teaching the unique call to marriage. The golden ring is held by one of the deputy hosts and only handed over to the Governor when needed."

The Governor of the Sea doesn't have a chance to switch ritual rings… Suppressing his anxiety, Lumian continued at a measured pace, "Did the sea prayer ritual fail last year?"

Lato initially seemed taken aback, but then relief crossed his face.

"Did the imposter seek your help?"

"Yes, for some reason, the sea prayer ritual failed. The sea's rage claimed the lives of the Governor of the Sea and the four Children of the Sea serving as deputy hosts. Only the Maidens of the Sea and some sailors survived."

The four deputy hosts are dead? Just as Lumian uncovered clues about April Fool's, he sensed the link had been abruptly severed.

The individuals with the best chance of substituting the ceremonial ring had all perished in the unsuccessful sea prayer ritual!

Lumian thought for a moment before inquiring, "What happened to the surviving Maidens of the Sea and sailors?"

"They're still alive, but under strict surveillance." Realizing that the failure to last year's sea prayer ritual was exposed, Lato, not dwelling on the survivors' details, continued, "We arranged marriages for the four Maidens of the Sea who lack actual sea powers with ordinary family members. Though it won't bring about a Beyonder-level change, it has its benefits.

"The sailors, from Milo Village, received some benefits from Juan Oro but are restricted from leaving Milo Village until this year's sea prayer ritual succeeds."

Shifting gears, Lumian asked, "Did the sailors transport the sacrificial lambs and other offerings for the marriage to the sea to the deck?"

"Yes." Lato nodded. "Sailors handle such cumbersome and laborious tasks."

Within the ranks of sailors, one among Bard, Mad Lady, or Ultraman had sneaked in. If the other side held a stronger Beyonder power or a mystical item from the Marauder pathway, they could snatch the genuine ceremonial ring during the exchange, swapping it with a counterfeit… It wouldn't be a surprise that the Marauder pathway, influenced by the Celestial Worthy, has key April Fool's members wielding matching strengths or artifacts… Lumian swiftly suspected this.

He turned to Lato Guiaro, keeping his tone composed.

“Tell me about the four Maidens of the Sea and the survivors from last year among the sailors.”

Lato recounted the details from memory.

Having absorbed the specifics about the potential targets, Lumian inquired further, “Were all participants in the sea sacrificial part thoroughly checked?”

“Absolutely. No unauthorized items allowed onboard to maintain the ritual’s integrity. And before the ship reaches its destination, Juan Oro will vigilantly oversee using his powers,” Lato elaborated.

As anticipated, Lumian nodded subtly.

“What powers does Juan Oro wield?”

[1] Adapted from the Marriage of the Sea ceremony of the Venice Doge set to be hanged.

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Chapter 561 - 561 Language of the Stars

561 Language of the Stars

Lato Guiaro struggled to keep silent, but the words burst out of him.

After a long internal battle, he finally responded, “He’s the most powerful among us. Before joining the Fisheries Guild committee, he served as a deputy host on the sea sacrifice ship a whopping 11 times. He gained numerous boons and established a solid connection with the sea.

“He can fly. If he’s not afraid of losing lifespan, he can temporarily take control of these waters on behalf of the Governor of the Sea. He possesses other special abilities, though they’re rarely revealed. We’re not entirely sure either. What we do know is that the failure of last year’s sea prayer ritual significantly weakened him.”

Lato paused and couldn’t resist adding, “First and foremost, we are astronomers. Our expertise lies in observing the stars’ transformations and calculating their patterns.

“Keep in mind that the annual sea prayer ritual doesn’t have a fixed date. It could happen any day during the first week of November. This is because, to enter that special area that communicates with the sea, the stars need to be in specific positions to open the corresponding passageway.

“The date of a similar phenomenon varies from year to year. Astronomers with sufficient knowledge must predict it in advance through observation and calculation.”

The idea of Fisheries Guild committee members being astronomers seems comical and absurd… Lumian didn’t interrupt Lato Guiaro’s narrative.

The self-proclaimed astronomer continued his explanation.

“Secondly, we are humans who worship the sea and the cosmos. We can receive revelations and guidance of fate from the changes in tides, the waves of the sea, and the trajectories of the stars, avoiding danger and making the right choices. Many times, we refer to such revelations and guidance as the Language of the Stars.”

The Language of the Stars… sounds pretty dangerous. How do you know it’s not something risky like Termiboros or Ludwig winking at you? Lumian resisted the

urge to shake his head and sighed inwardly.

“Furthermore, we are descendants of the sea and the cosmos, serving as clergymen who offer sacrifices to them.

“We can manipulate the power of the land to completely immobilize the target or make them float.

“We can emit rays from the cosmos, causing damage to the enemy’s body structure and weakening them. Without the corresponding superpowers to treat them, they will face an irreversible and agonizing death.

“We can also create a powerful magnetic effect. Combined with the power of the land, we can generate a half-real illusion. We call it the Cosmic Void.” Lato’s expression gradually turned fanatical.

From a mysticism perspective, the Beyonder characteristics of the Children of the Sea involve the land and the cosmos. According to Aurore’s knowledge, it encompasses gravity, radiation, and electromagnetism. Furthermore, due to gravity and electromagnetism, they also possess some illusionary and spatial abilities. Lumian, rephrasing Lato Guiaro’s words for easier comprehension, couldn’t help but criticize inwardly, Hey, you’re the Children of the Sea, not the Children of the Stars. Why don’t I see many sea-related powers…

Lato took a deep breath and continued, “We are also the navigators of the sea and the cosmos. We can find the right path under any circumstances, guided by the performance of the sea and the stars. We can use this power to help others.

“Without our guidance, ships can’t enter that special water even on the correct date. That’s why Nolfi insisted on returning to Port Santa before setting off. Although she knew the coordinates and route of the sea sacrificial land from her mother, she would never have reached it if she didn’t set off from Port Santa.

“The spawn that come to land from the seabed also rely on our abilities in this area to survive the fog, vortex, and storms without losing their way in the sea route or being swallowed by darkness.”

Navigators… Lumian suddenly recalled the strange fish he had encountered on the Flying Bird, the Mutated Bannerfish, who could control the waves.

They were also known as Death Navigators!

“Have you heard of the strange fish known as Death Navigators?” Lumian interrupted Lato Guiaro’s account.

Lato hesitated for a moment before responding, “Yes, they’re also spawn of the sea. We all suspect that they were transformed from the Governors of the Sea who returned to the sea.”

Transformed from the Governors of the Sea? Lumian raised his eyebrows.

Lato swallowed and explained, “They should still be fused with the sea, so future generations will be born, but their strength is inferior to theirs.

“In the past, they only roamed those waters. In recent years, for some reason, they occasionally swam out and returned. After the sea prayer ritual failed last year, this situation became even more frequent.”

Did the failure of the ritual cause the Death Navigators to go out more frequently? Did the Death Navigators lure sailors to those special waters? Were they ultimately devoured by the sea? Lumian’s mind raced with questions, but he knew that Lato Guiaro couldn’t answer them.

Lato returned to the main topic.

“We can still manipulate the waves to a certain extent and influence the tides, but we can’t compare to Juan Oro, much less the Governor of the Sea.”

That’s more like a Child of the Sea? That’s why they think it’s easier to bury me in the sea? Lumian pondered as he inquired about a few more details. He then lowered his right foot from his left knee and slowly stood up.

Nodding at the Knight of Swords in Lato’s eyes, Lumian said to Lato Guiaro, “Last request, release Nolfi and Batna.”

With that, Lumian walked to the bedroom window.

Simultaneously, the Knight of Swords, who had possessed Lato Guiaro, vanished. The committee member of the Fisheries Guild regained control of his body.

As Lumian left, Lato Guiaro couldn’t help but express his confusion, fear, and a hint of uncontrollable emotion, “I thought you’d kill me once you got the information…”

Otherwise, wouldn’t it expose the fact that you have many hidden helpers, the secret of a faction behind you, and the uniqueness of your helpers?

Lumian didn’t look back and continued forward.

On the way, he pressed down on his golden straw hat and smiled.

“To you, this might be important, but not to me.”

Just as Lato Guiaro was about to say something, he saw the body of the adventurer, Louis Berry, suddenly turn black and thin, transforming into a shadow that disappeared from the crimson moonlight’s reach.

After staring at the darkness for a while, Lato adjusted the collar of his robe and left the master bedroom. He personally headed to the basement to release Nolfi and Batna.

Opposite the building where his family resided, beneath a row of verdant trees,

Lumian leaned leisurely against the black gas streetlamp pole, gazing at the glass windows illuminated by the light.

The disheveled, pale-faced Knight of Swords materialized behind him and asked in a deep voice, “Are you really not going to kill him?”

Lumian chuckled and said, “If we kill him, who’s going to inform Juan Oro that I have powerful helpers and the support of a powerful faction lurking in the shadows?”

He couldn’t just toss tarot cards at Lato Guiaro’s corpse, could he?

Furthermore, the problem lay in the fact that no one knew that the adventurer, Louis Berry, was a Minor Arcana cardholder of the Tarot Club.

Upon hearing Lumian’s response, the Knight of Swords pondered for a moment before vanishing into the darkness.

Before long, Batna emerged from the house where Lato Guiaro’s extended family resided, clutching his rapier and revolver.

Upon seeing Lumian, they looked a little ashamed and approached him with slow steps.

“Thank you for saving us,” Nolfi, adorable in a blouse and brown pants, expressed her sincere gratitude.

Batna said, “I’m well aware of Nolfi’s intentions and haven’t been deceived by her. I sympathize with the tragic fate of these sea spawn and hope to help her end all of this.”

Lumian looked at Nolfi.

“What kind of tragic end will it lead to?”

The committee members of the Fisheries Guild seemed quite pleased.

Nolfi fell silent for a moment before saying, “All Maidens of the Sea and Children of the Sea eventually transform into a lizard-like humanoid monster. Perhaps earlier, perhaps later, my mother passed away because she was attacked by assassins hired by the Fisheries Guild and wanted to die as a human. Not only did she refuse treatment, but she also inflicted some damage on herself.”

In that case, the humanoid lizard at Rubió Paco’s house is a common sight in families around Port Santa. Why the need for secrecy? Lumian turned to Batna with a smile, asking, “Did you know Nolfi would transform into a humanoid lizard?”

“Yes.” Batna expressed that he didn’t mind.

At that moment, Nolfi inquired, “Then do you know what a humanoid lizard looks like?”

As she spoke, the rather attractive female adventurer’s eyes widened. Shimmering illusory scales appeared on her body, and her skin transformed into that of a snake.

Batna jumped in fright, taking a step back involuntarily.

Lumian continued to ask Nolfi, “Why didn’t you rent a boat at a nearby port and find a sailor to sail it over? Why choose a ship rental company in Port Santa?”

Nolfi undid the phantom scales, reverting to her original appearance, frustration and embarrassment evident in her voice.

“In Port Santa, people often rent boats for fishing and sightseeing. This should be a very ordinary thing…”

Lumian sighed helplessly.

“Did you know that last year’s sea prayer ritual failed? The Fisheries Guild will be on high alert this year, investigating all unstable factors. Besides, the sea prayer ritual is only a few days away. It’s inevitable to start paying attention to those who rent boats to go out to sea.”

Nolfi and Batna remained silent, resembling two students.

After a moment, Nolfi asked in surprise and suspicion, “Did the sea prayer ritual fail last year?”

Lumian didn’t answer immediately. He thought for a moment and said,

“You want to end the sea prayer ritual with just the two of you? What gave you the confidence?”

Nolfi pursed her lips and stated, “As long as I can enter those waters and find the palace, I have a way to destroy it and end everything.”

“Palace?” Lumian’s eyebrows twitched.

Nolfi nodded.

“When my mother was possessed by the sea, she saw a strange palace through her spirituality and the connection between them. It’s located at the bottom of the sea. It’s the palace of the sea!”

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Chapter 562 - 562 Changed Plans

562 Changed Plans

Palace? Lumian hadn't anticipated gaining information that Lato Guiaro lacked from Nolfi.

After a brief pause, he inquired, "What's the palace like?"

Was it an ancient relic or the abode of some natural spirit?

Could the sea prayer ritual be tapping into the palace's inner power?

Nolfi shook her head.

"My mother couldn't give a detailed description. She just mentioned that the palace is unlike any structure on land. It boasts a peculiar design, with smooth curves and a reflective metallic sheen. Overall, it's silver-gray."

Lumian envisioned the palace based on Nolfi's account, though lacking specifics, he could only conjure an approximate image.

He grinned and remarked, "If that's truly the sea palace, do you honestly believe you two can bring it down?

"If you struggle against Lato Guiaro and his crew, how do you plan to breach the sea spawn's defenses? How will you escape the sea's fury?"

Nolfi paused for a moment before responding, "I have my ways."

She didn't elaborate on the method.

Could a Child of the Sea, likely below Sequence 7 in strength, truly destroy the sea palace? An entity capable of unleashing violent storms across the entire sea… Lumian pondered, forming a sudden hypothesis.

Was Nolfi's confidence rooted in collaboration with others? Had she not returned to Port Santa without adequate preparations?

As Lumian's mind raced, he shifted his gaze toward Batna.

Batna Comté, who had inadvertently distanced himself from Nolfi by two to three steps, had just re-sheathed his rapier and concealed his revolver.

Sensing Lumian's scrutiny, he grinned sheepishly and explained, "I'm here for support and to command the ship. You might not know, but I served as a second mate for a while before becoming an adventurer."

In other words, he implied: "I'm not sure about Nolfi's plan either. Whether she succeeds or not doesn't concern me much. I've fulfilled my duty as a lover by providing some assistance."

I can tell that you come from a good background based on your refined attire and grooming… Initially, I thought you ran away from home, enchanted by Gehrman Sparrow's adventure story, and went to sea to become an adventurer. Now, it seems your family recommended you to be a second mate to gain work experience. After a while, you resigned and chose the path of an adventurer… Lumian was unsure how to assess Batna's romanticism. Glancing at him, he commented, "Do you realize how dangerous this situation is?"

Batna cleared his throat and replied, "I thought the Children of the Seas wouldn't be too formidable. Nolfi and I have sparred before."

Lumian eyed Batna for a couple of seconds before redirecting his gaze to Nolfi.

"What are your plans moving forward?"

Without directly inquiring about hidden collaborators, Lumian circumvented the question, aiming to lower Nolfi's guard and uncover any hints from her responses.

Nolfi pursed her lips and said, "We've been exposed and targeted by the Fisheries Guild. Our original plan is no longer viable. I intend to lay low until the sea prayer ritual concludes."

"Why not just leave?" Batna interjected, expressing surprise on Lumian's "behalf."

He believed that once Nolfi's motives and identity were revealed, she would promptly abandon this operation and devise an alternative plan for a future sea prayer ritual.

Nolfi fell silent for a moment before revealing, "If the sea prayer ritual succeeds, and I'm still in Port Santa, being a Child of the Sea with a relatively pure bloodline, I should be able to gain a certain boon…"

She paused, briefly gazing at the ground.

"Although it might hasten my transformation into a humanoid lizard, it can also enhance my strength…"

A subtle sorrow lingered in her words.

Batna stared blankly, his mouth agape, but no words escaped him.

Lumian raised his hand, adjusting the golden straw hat on his head. Using a well-known line from the Adventurer series, he remarked, “This is both a blessing and a curse.”

As Louis Berry prepared to depart, Nolfi once again expressed her sincere gratitude.

“I don’t know how to express my gratitude. If you need any help, feel free to come to me.”

“You can find me too,” Batna chimed in.

Caught between staying with Nolfi or leaving Port Santa, he hesitated.

Lumian’s gaze swept across their faces, and he suddenly smiled.

“Coincidentally, I have something for you two to do.”

Nolfi was taken aback but nodded gently.

“Just shoot.”

…

Having bid farewell to Nolfi and Batna, Lumian stealthily returned to Solow Motel from the shadows.

Emerging from the darkness in the corner of the master bedroom, he found the Knight of Swords standing by the curtains, silently observing him under the crimson moonlight.

Why do you always appear like a scene from a ghost story… Is this a Wraith trait or a manifestation of the potion’s influence? Lumian critiqued, expressing gratitude,

“Thank you for your assistance.”

The Knight of Swords remained silent. He looked at Lumian and inquired, “After controlling Lato Guiaro, it seems you’ve altered your original plan?”

Lumian chuckled.

“You’re quite perceptive, but I changed my mind perhaps a little earlier or later than the moment you specified.”

He responded with a hint of a charlatan’s demeanor and elaborated with a smile, “How can an original plan be executed without any changes? That’s not the mark of a Conspirer but an omnipotent and omniscient one.

“During the planning process, one must adjust their approach based on feedback, new information, and changes in the situation, while ensuring the true motive remains intact.”

Hence, concealing his true motives was crucial.

It was akin to the many paths between the starting point and the end, with often only one true conclusion. This point was the most vulnerable to blockages and ambushes.

The Knight of Swords listened quietly and then silently vanished by the window.

Lumian allowed himself to relax, washed up, and retired to bed, sleeping soundly until six in the morning.

Following breakfast provided by the motel, he directed Lugano to take Ludwig to the streets for some snacks.

Observing their departure through the closed door, Lumian returned to the master bedroom, where the curtains still hung. In the dimness, he pulled out the armchair from the desk and settled in.

After an indeterminate period, he suddenly noticed glimmers in the depths of the darkness.

He felt himself suspended in midair, devoid of solid ground beneath his feet or a backrest behind him.

Lumian maintained a stoic expression as he gazed into the profound void with a cosmos-like backdrop. From a distance, Juan Oro, the president of the Fisheries Guild, approached, attired in a formal suit and wielding a walking stick.

Lumian looked at the old man in silence, displaying no surprise, as if anticipating Juan Oro’s arrival.

As the distance closed to a certain extent, Juan Oro’s wrinkles trembled as he uttered in Intisian, “Milo Village was once obliterated, along with the sea spawn that ventured onto the land. Yet, we stand here today.

“As long as the sea endures, as long as the cosmos persists, as long as Port Santa remains a forbidden land for death, we can resurface from the sea’s depths, regardless of the blows we endure or the loss of our descendants. We can rebuild Milo Village and initiate the sea prayer ritual anew.

“This is attested by the clergyman of the Earth Mother Church, their combat ascetics, and their nuns.

“If we, the Children of the Sea, are truly pushed to the edge of a precipice, we possess the courage and determination to drag the enemy into the abyss. This is because we firmly believe in our indestructible spirit and the ability to rebuild our

village, preventing its extinction."

You share all this with me to convey that the Fisheries Guild and Milo Village's sea spawn are unafraid of threats, possessing both the ability and courage to face powerful enemies. Furthermore, you suggest that the corresponding legacies will endure, resurfacing from the sea in the future. It's akin to a warning, cautioning me not to go too far. Otherwise, they won't hesitate to engage in an internecine conflict… Lumian comprehended Juan Oro's veiled message and chose not to respond. He silently observed the old man, waiting for him to continue.

Juan Oro's azure eyes reflected the image of the black-haired, green-eyed adventurer Louis Berry. In a resonant voice, he questioned, "What do you and the forces supporting you desire? What is your aim? We won't tolerate the disruption of the sea prayer ritual, nor will we abandon the foundations laid in Port Santa."

Realizing that adventurer Louis Berry is not only formidable but also backed by a faction, they must perceive me as a tough adversary. If they were to confront me head-on, they might find it challenging to prevail. Hence, he's here to negotiate, seeking to exchange concessions for my withdrawal? Is he attempting to assert his bottom line and strength to dissuade me from rash actions, leaving both sides with a way out? Lumian showed no surprise. He glanced around and remarked, "Why isn't there a chair? I prefer discussing matters while seated."

After a brief silence from Juan Oro, the armchair reappeared behind Lumian, and he resumed his original posture.

Lumian calmly gazed at Juan Oro, the Fisheries Guild president, and stated, "Would you believe me if I told you I never intended to disrupt the sea prayer ritual?"

"Never intended to disrupt the sea prayer ritual…" Juan Oro repeated, his deep wrinkles furrowing.

Lumian continued, "As long as you're willing to spare the innocent, like the fake Governor of the Sea, cooperation isn't out of the question."

"Cooperation?" Juan Oro couldn't conceal his astonishment. He scrutinized the adventurer who had forcefully intervened in the Fisheries Guild's affairs upon arriving at Port Santa. Lumian had stormed the Governor of the Sea's residence, blown up the Fisheries Guild's main building, and nearly killed his grandson. He wondered if his hearing had slowed down like the other elders.

A smile gradually spread across Lumian's face. He leaned back in his chair and snapped his fingers, igniting a crimson flame.

"Yes, cooperation."

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Chapter 563 - 563 Another Attempt

563 Another Attempt

Upon learning the intricacies of Louis Berry's collaboration and his unwavering commitment, Juan Oro found himself questioning the reliability of his own ears once again.

It wasn't that the other party's demands were outrageous or absurd, making it sound like some kind of jest. On the contrary, the Fisheries Guild could fulfill his desires with minimal effort, without requiring a substantial payment.

This went beyond Juan Oro's initial expectations.

Prior to meeting Louis Berry, he had mentally prepared himself for potential ruthless "extortion." After all, considering the ease with which the other party subdued Lato Guiaro and displayed strength against the Fisheries Guild, Oro had anticipated a tougher negotiation. Surprisingly, Louis Berry proved to be more amenable to discussion than Oro had envisioned.

This led Juan Oro to contemplate whether there might be some deception at play. He wondered if, in the future, Berry would abruptly turn against him during their collaboration, breaking the promises made.

Lumian observed the wrinkled old man silently, refraining from clarifying his intentions. Explaining might expose his true motives, and the timing wasn't right yet.

After careful consideration, Juan Oro let out a sigh of age.

"We can accede to your request."

"However, throughout our collaboration, we will remain vigilant and formulate contingency plans."

Lumian smiled, rising from the suspended armchair in the void. He extended his right hand to Juan Oro.

"Pleasure working with you."

Juan Oro shook his hand and remarked, "You're not as crazy as you seem…"

Lumian pondered for a moment and smirked.

"Of course, I've always been a clever, rational, and polite adventurer."

Juan Oro wasn't in the mood for idle chatter. He nodded at Louis Berry and stated, "Given your preference for discretion in our collaboration, I should depart now. Otherwise, my visit might become known to others."

Lumian took a moment to contemplate before responding, "I'll dispatch my concealed companion to Milo Village tomorrow night. Ensure the surviving sailors from last year's ritual are brought to your main building in advance and kept under control."

"Agreed." Juan Oro didn't object; this was one of the terms they had agreed upon.

As the cane-wielding old man prepared to leave, Lumian called out thoughtfully,

"I'm a man of my word. I promised Giorgia I wouldn't disclose the details of the commission to anyone.

"But I have a question for you. Have any Children of the Sea from the Paco family gone missing recently or not been seen for an extended period?"

He hinted that his inquiry was linked to the Paco family's commission.

Juan Oro's expression darkened as he contemplated for more than ten seconds.

"The Paco family's Children of the Sea have made appearances recently.

"At first, I thought something had happened to Rubió's mother, Martha, that we shouldn't know about. Yet, it turns out she's still fine, just severely injured."

No missing Children of the Sea from the Paco family? Where did the humanoid lizard come from? Lumian was alarmed.

His initial thought was that the Paco family might be involved with other Children of the Sea. His second thought was that one of the Paco family's Children of the Sea might have been replaced.

Is the impostor parading around with the original's face, while the real individual had transformed into a humanoid lizard, meeting their demise at the hands of the great adventurer?

Lumian couldn't help but associate the substitute and the frequent appearances of the person in question with a Sequence name: Faceless!

It aligned with the Lie earring's Sequence—the previous Sequence of Marionettist Loki!

Could it be that after Loki's resurrection, he infiltrated Port Santa and clandestinely replaced a key member of the Paco family? Was his goal to set a trap for me and execute something during the sea prayer ritual, continuing what he had left incomplete the previous year?

With these thoughts swirling, Lumian couldn't help but experience a blend of excitement and fear.

However, upon further consideration, he dismissed the notion.

If Loki had genuinely substituted an essential member of the Paco family, there wouldn't be any humanoid lizard sightings. He could have discreetly resolved the issue and erased all traces, avoiding such an obvious loophole!

Moreover, Rubió Paco wasn't the sole Child of the Sea in the Paco family. Martha, as a Maiden of the Sea, also wielded the residual power of the sea. How could they struggle against a humanoid lizard whose strength hadn't reached the Mid-Sequence? Why would they take the risk of exposing the secret and hiring an external adventurer, Louis Berry, to handle the situation?

With Lumian's comprehension of the sea prayer ritual and sea spawn deepening, it left him even more bewildered about the Paco family's previous decisions. He believed that crucial information was concealed within.

He turned to Juan Oro, organizing his thoughts.

"Are descendants of the same Maidens of the Sea prohibited from attacking each other?"

"There's no such restriction." Juan Oro dismissed Lumian's speculation.

Lumian deliberately mused aloud, "Then why did the Paco family intentionally hire an outsider like me for the commission instead of utilizing their own Beyonders?"

Juan Oro maintained his serious expression.

"It's for the same reason I hired someone to monitor Paco's house. That's why I sent the Little Devil to interrogate you. That's why I needed to meet Martha."

You call that wrinkled, old man-like monster "Little Devil"? Lumian nodded gently and asked, "The Paco family must be harboring a significant secret."

He refrained from delving deeper and watched as Juan Oro turned away, walking off with his cane.

Soon, the Cosmic Void around him dissipated, and he "returned" to the draped master bedroom of the suite, seated in the armchair before the desk.

Lumian smiled, pivoted, grasped the curtain, and drew it open.

The morning sun flooded in, casting a radiant glow.

…

The next night, within the ancestral house of the Oro family in Milo Village, a structure only one floor shorter than the residence of the Governor of the Sea.

The building had undergone numerous renovations, showcasing a fusion of antiquated and modern architecture. Blackened gray stone walls stood alongside concrete pillars, and beneath the seaweed-covered roof lay red-

ringed tiles.

The door to the first-floor lounge had been shut, leaving only an elderly man with a black cane—Juan Oro—and his cherished grandson—Fernandez Oro—

alongside eight unconscious villagers of Milo Village sprawled on the ground.

Suddenly, a shadow flickered in a corner of the room, and a figure materialized.

Standing just over 1.7 meters tall, the figure possessed an ordinary face and sported a brownish-green short-sleeved shirt, loose brownish-yellow pants, strapless leather shoes with vents, and a short circular felt hat.

“Who are you?” Juan Oro inquired in Intisian.

As one of Port Santa’s strongest sea merchants, he had sailed numerous times between the ages of 30 and 50. It was only natural for him to comprehend Intisian.

The man responded fluently in Highlander, “I’m Louis Berry’s companion. You can call me Charname.”

It doesn’t seem like the spirit-type Beyonder Lato encountered… Louis Berry has more than one companion lurking in the shadows… Juan Oro rejoiced that he had chosen negotiation first.

With these thoughts racing through his mind, he glanced at Fernandez, whose face remained pale, and understood that he wasn’t entirely pleased.

It was common for young lads to be calculating about who suffered and who benefited, often forgetting their most essential motives.

“You can start questioning them,” Juan Oro instructed the man known as Charname. “Over the past year, we’ve employed various methods to determine if they’re lying or not. We’ve even exploited the uniqueness of other sea spawn. All the results indicate that they’ve told the complete truth and concealed nothing. The failure of the sea prayer ritual has nothing to do with them.”

Charname’s lips curved into a smile as he replied, “How would I know if I don’t give it a shot myself?”

Approaching the unconscious sailors, he retrieved a dagger and stabbed their fingertips one by one, smearing the corresponding blood on various spots on the back of his hand.

Amidst the pain, the sailors began to awaken one after another.

In front of them, Charname produced a mirror and smiled.

“Your blood will reveal if you’re lying and if you’re the genuine person. If anyone deceives me, their blood will burn on the mirror, and they’ll face the same fate.

“Alright, answer them one by one.”

As Charname spoke, he calmly transferred the blood from the back of his hand to the mirror, a strange sight as it seemed to seep into the glass.

The sailors glanced at Juan Oro, realizing this was another investigation into the cause of the sea prayer ritual’s failure last year. Skilfully, they recounted their experiences, leaving no details omitted.

After hearing their accounts, Charname asked thoughtfully, “Were Iru and Salah responsible for transporting the lamb sacrifices?”

“Yes,” all the sailors replied in unison.

Charname pressed on, “Did they both perish during the sea prayer ritual?”

The surviving sailors nodded, confirming that their two companions had been thrown overboard in the tidal wave of the failed ritual, never to surface again.

Turning to Juan Oro, Charname inquired, “Do you have any belongings from Iru and Salah? Clothes they’ve worn many times, toothbrushes not discarded, and the like.

“I want to try summoning their spirits. Although most of their spirits would have dissipated over the past year and can’t remember effective information, the state of their spirits can reveal certain things, such as deep resentment and hatred.”

Juan Oro shook his head.

“We attempted it after the sea prayer ritual. We couldn’t summon their spirits. Those consumed by the raging sea would have their spirits devoured as well.”

Charname chuckled and suggested, “Let’s give it another shot. There’s nothing to lose by trying.”

Juan Oro pondered for a moment and agreed. He immediately instructed Fernandez to retrieve Iru’s extracted tooth and Salah’s clothes, previously used for spirit channeling.

Then, they observed as Charname set up the altar and initiated a summoning ritual.

“I!

“I summon in my name:

“The sailor of Port Santa’s Milo Village, a man named Iru Adela, the owner of this tooth…”

A gust of wind blew, and the altar’s candle flame took on a dark-green hue.

A blurry figure quickly materialized.

Success? He actually succeeded? Fernandez’s pupils dilated as he gazed above the candle flame.

The figure vaguely resembled Iru, but it showed no signs of drowning; its skin was pale-white and swollen. Instead, its face was covered in blood, and there was an evident wound on its forehead.

The specter’s eyes brimmed with pain and hatred.

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Chapter 564 - 564 Individual Roles

564 Individual Roles

564 Individual Roles

Looking at the specter suspected to be Iru, Juan Oro's expression shifted.

Back then, even though they had missed the optimal time for spirit channeling, they still managed to learn about the deaths on the first day and found items that could accurately pinpoint the target. Utilizing the Little Devil's ability, they completed the summoning, but none of the deceased spirits appeared. This led them to believe that the human spirits that angered the sea would be devoured. No further attempts were made.

Nearly a year later, the summoning had actually succeeded!

Moreover, it appeared that Iru hadn't drowned at sea but had been shot.

This was entirely different from the backlash caused by the failure of the sea prayer ritual!

Charname used Hermes to inquire about the spirit suspected to be Iru, but the target was already in a daze and couldn't recall anything. Even his appearance had become blurry, assimilated by the environment.

Charname concluded the ritual and used Salah's clothes, worn over many years, to summon the spirit of the other deceased.

This time, nothing happened.

Charname refrained from further attempts. He extinguished the candle's flame and dispelled the wall of spirituality. In Highlander, he addressed Juan Oro, "The problem has become clearer."

Juan Oro didn't respond. Instead, he turned to his grandson, Fernandez.

"Take them out and send them home. Instruct each of them."

"Alright." Although Fernandez yearned to hear Charname's conjecture and understand the subsequent events, he didn't dare disobey his grandfather's orders. He hurriedly led the surviving sailors out of the lounge and closed the door.

After a few moments, Juan Oro shifted his gaze to Charname, whose features didn't stand out.

“Are you suggesting that the Iru who perished during the sea prayer ritual was an imposter?”

Charname asked with a smirk, “Why do you think the fake Iru is really dead? The others might have been swallowed by the sea, but not him.”

Disregarding the miraculous resurrection, nobody present could prove that the fake Iru had indeed fallen into the sea.

Observing Juan Oro’s silence, Charname pressed on, “The real Iru should have been assassinated by those saboteurs days or even weeks before the sea prayer ritual. No, he was more likely to have been kidnapped, killed by a gun a period after the sea prayer ritual completed; after all, the living cannot have their spirit channeled. Later, someone disguised themselves as him and lived in Milo Village for a period. Without arousing suspicion, they boarded the Governor of the Sea’s wedding ship as a sailor.

“Right, is Iru the kind with no living elders, no spouse, no kids, and not residing with siblings?”

Juan Oro’s eyes narrowed as he spoke, “More or less. Their grandmother passed away over a decade ago. His parents, Children of the Sea, established a separate family. After reaching adulthood, they lost control of their powers, turning into pure sea spawn. We had to send them back to the sea.”

“As expected, they picked the sailor with the least difficult disguise,” Charname remarked with a sigh.

Juan Oro frowned and said, “Yet, everyone boarding the ship undergoes a routine inspection by another sea spawn to confirm authenticity.”

Charname chuckled.

“As you said, it’s a routine inspection, and in this world, many disguises require specific methods or deeper identification to uncover.”

Juan Oro nodded solemnly.

Charname kindly suggested with a hint of flaunting, “Next time, it might be wise to draw blood from everyone boarding the ship and compare it to their closest relatives. It could reveal their true bloodline.”

“That’s an idea,” Juan Oro tersely acknowledged.

Over the centuries, the sea prayer ritual had encountered no issues, so they hadn’t considered refining the details.

Juan Oro inquired, “What do those who disrupted the ritual want?”

“We’re not certain either,” Charname shrugged, glancing towards the curtained window that led to the Governor of the Sea’s residence.

Juan Oro sensed a hint in Charname’s allusion to something Louis Berry had mentioned earlier. He subtly nodded and added, “When this year’s sea prayer ritual succeeds, we’ll release Miguel and allow him to live in Torres. By then, the failure of last year’s ritual won’t remain a secretive burden. There’s no need for us to harm Miguel.”

“Miguel?” Charname inquired thoughtfully.

“He’s the false Governor of the Sea. He used to work for the Fisheries Company, and his lineage traces back to Milo Village,” Juan Oro explained succinctly.

Charname diverted his gaze, a faint smile gracing his lips.

“He’s had his year of indulgence. Fear may linger, but everything comes with a price.”

The companion of the great adventurer paused, curiosity lighting up his eyes.

“Did your ancestor come from the depths of the sea, or did ordinary fishermen suddenly gain inspiration and enlightenment, mastering the art of pleasing the sea and gaining its favor?” he inquired.

Juan Oro took a moment of silence before responding, “We don’t know. Both possibilities are equally plausible. Milo Village was once eradicated by the Earth Mother Church. Many legacies were severed, and we’re left clueless about our ancestors’ origins.

“On a personal note, I lean towards the second theory. We’re different from typical sea spawn. The children we bear initially resemble humans. It’s only as they absorb more of the sea’s power that they transform into humanoid lizards. Additionally, while our strength weakens, theirs does not.”

Charname nodded in agreement.

“I’m inclined to think the second scenario is more likely too.”

He then asked, “Have all traces of Milo Village’s ancestors truly been erased? Is there no evidence left?”

Juan Oro studied Charname for a moment before revealing, “There’s some residual evidence in the underground chamber of the Governor of the Sea’s residence, but it’s just symbols and patterns. They’re meaningless and indecipherable.

“If you want to see them, wait until the vigil ritual. But aren’t you concerned about the risk of exposing our collaboration by going to the Governor of the Sea’s residence now?”

“Fair point.” After obtaining other details, Charname abruptly receded into the shadows in the corner and vanished.

Juan Oro watched as the great adventurer’s companion disappeared and released a slow sigh.

He sensed a storm brewing around Port Santa.

…

In the master bedroom of the fifth-floor suite at Solow Motel.

Emerging from the shadows, Charname adorned the silver Lie earring behind his left ear. His eyes swiftly transformed, becoming as clear as a lake, and his flaxen-tinted hair cascaded over his shoulders.

Franca, still radiating astonishing charm despite her male attire, tossed the earring back to Lumian. She retrieved a black rubber band from her pocket and tied her long hair into a high ponytail.

“I’ve discovered traces of Bard!” the Demoness of Pleasure exclaimed with joy.

“Why Bard and not the other two?” Lumian sat in an armchair in front of the desk, tightly drawn curtains behind him.

Deliberately returning to Trier and bringing Franca to Port Santa for her assistance, Lumian believed himself inferior to the Demoness of Pleasure in divination and spirit channeling. Rather than wasting the truth serum, he sought Franca’s direct help. Additionally, he wanted Franca to assume the guise of his other identity, completely separating “him” from the adventurer Louis Berry. This would enable him to deceive those secretly monitoring him and potentially execute future deceptions.

Franca shared her findings from the spirit channeling today and the completed conversation.

“The fake Iru must first possess powers akin to a Faceless’s, followed by adept thieving skills. Long ago, I Know Someone mentioned that Bard is a Sequence 6 Prometheus of the Marauder pathway. It’s highly likely he’s even stronger now.

“If others hadn’t confirmed that Loki wasn’t involved in last year’s sea prayer ritual prank, at least not openly, he would have been the most suitable to impersonate Iru. Now, the probability of Iru being Bard is higher.

“As a Mid-Sequence Marauder Beyonder, perhaps he possesses an item similar to Lie. Maybe he prayed to that Celestial Worthy, undergoing a change in physique and appearance. Additionally, he could be imbued with mystical anti-divination and anti-prophecy traits. Marauder is one of the three pathways most easily influenced by Celestial Worthy.”

Lumian listened quietly, and a smile gradually formed on his face.

“Bard’s role and purpose in last year’s ritual are essentially clear.

“He disguised himself as a sailor, boarded the ship, stole the genuine ceremonial ring, and replaced it with a fake one. Then, he willingly leaped into the sea, feigning his death to make his escape!”

Lumian paused briefly before continuing, “The question now is, what roles did Mad Lady and Ultraman play in this matter? So far, their presence doesn’t seem to affect the final failure of the sea prayer ritual.”

Franca pursed her lips and paced back and forth.

“Mad Lady might handle receiving and communication. For instance, after Bard jumped into the sea, she could ‘teleport’ over and whisk him away to prevent him from being consumed by the tumultuous sea. Only a Traveler possesses such an ability.

“Ultraman is likely responsible for providing information about the sea prayer ritual and devising the corresponding plan. But that can’t be all. He probably has other roles…”

Lumian leaned back in his chair, stroking his chin thoughtfully.

“I concur with your hypothesis about Mad Lady, but according to the information we have, entering those special waters requires guidance from the Children of the Sea, following a specific route. How did Mad Lady ‘teleport’ inside? Was she lurking on the ship? Or does Bard carry some special coordinates with him? It’s certainly not a physical item; otherwise, it would have been discovered.

“As for Ultraman, I’ve always suspected he’s a native of Port Santa with a profound understanding of the sea prayer ritual. He likely orchestrated the prank last year.”

At this point, Lumian stood up.

“My intuition suggests that if we can uncover Ultraman’s actions in last year’s prank and identify his role beyond being the mastermind, we can discern April Fool’s true motives in this matter!”

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Chapter 565 - 565 Possible Breakthrough

565 Possible Breakthrough

565 Possible Breakthrough

Franca's emotions were stirred by Lumian's words, and she responded with anticipation, "Then it's akin to catching a fox by its tail. When the time comes, we'll summon good helpers and strive to eliminate a few more key members of April Fool's!"

As she spoke, she gritted her teeth.

Despite Lumian and Franca making various guesses and deductions about Ultraman's role in last year's prank, none of them felt they had grasped the key to the mystery.

Franca exhaled and said, "Phew, there are still some important puzzle pieces missing. See if you can fish out more details."

She needed to return to Trier.

Lumian tersely acknowledged her words and asked thoughtfully, "How's your search for the Tamara family's descendant going?"

"Nothing yet, but Madam Judgment intends to inform the other Major Arcana card holders about this. She hopes they can help keep an eye out," Franca briefly explained her situation.

Lumian gazed at her face and said, "I have an investigative direction."

"What?" Franca perked up.

Lumian's lips curled up.

"Investigate the other members of the Demoness Sect in Trier.

"Given the close ties between certain members of the Tamara family and the Demoness Sect, they might even be collaborating to establish the secret organization, Theosophy Order. There's a chance that one of them could directly join the Demoness Sect.

“Moreover, considering Madam Judgment’s mission for you to infiltrate the Demoness Sect, discern the Primordial Demoness’s current state and issues, why not investigate other Demonesses? Are you going to wait until you reach the level of a powerhouse like a Demoness of Red before gathering information? Do you believe there will be enough Angel-level Hunter Beyonder characteristics to aid your return to your original gender at that point?”

“Why the Demoness of Red?” Franca instinctively focused on this question.

Lumian smiled.

“Have you forgotten your nickname, Madame Red Boots?”

Franca smiled awkwardly.

“Isn’t that to create a persona with characteristics that can be easily changed when you’re on the run? It’s clearly different from the description on the wanted poster.

“Ahem, isn’t it too dangerous to investigate other Demonesses under the watchful eyes of the Demoness of Black?”

Lumian raised his eyebrows and smiled meaningfully.

“Why are you investigating the Tamara family?”

“Investigating Mirror People,” Franca replied subconsciously.

Lumian asked again, “And who assigned you the Mirror People investigation?”

“The Demoness of Black…” Franca immediately shut her mouth.

She then muttered to herself, “However, an intricate balance needs to be struck. The source of the intel must be fabricated nicely; otherwise, we’ll still be suspected.”

Lumian didn’t say anything else. He grabbed Franca’s shoulder and planned to send her back to Trier.

Franca glanced at the curtained window and eagerly said, “Remember to ask me for help when you visit the combat nuns in the future.”

She arrived in Port Santa in the afternoon and spent a long time using the fake name—Charname—she chose herself, and the face on Lumian’s fake ID to travel about. With her fluent Highlander, she quickly grasped the folklore and combat nuns’ styles.

Lumian scoffed dismissively.

“Don’t even think about it. You can’t impregnate them.”

Franca replied indignantly, “Theoretically, it’s not impossible, but it’s quite dangerous. Think about it, Madame Pualis.”

Lumian was left speechless.

“Besides, giving birth isn’t the only important thing in life…” Franca continued to search for an excuse.

Lumian exhaled silently and activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

He disappeared from the master bedroom with Franca, who was still talking.

In no time, Lumian reappeared at the exact spot he had left.

Shaking his head and teasing Franca, he eased back into the armchair.

It had to be acknowledged that bantering and joking with friends, free from the need for caution, proved helpful in relieving the pent-up emotions within him.

Having regained his composure, Lumian reclined in his chair, sorting through the information on the sea prayer ritual and various rhetoric in his mind. He sought details that might unveil traces of Ultraman’s existence and confirm any overlooked issues.

As a Conspirer, Lumian didn’t require jotting down key points on paper. He relied on his eyes to decipher the hints. All the information formed a colossal spiderweb in his mind, slowly weaving and transforming.

After a while, he abruptly sat upright.

A breakthrough had been unearthed that could expose the essence of the sea prayer ritual.

Lumian stood and exited the master bedroom. He spotted Ludwig devouring a crispy potato omelet at the dining table in the living room.

Seated across from the boy, Lumian smiled as he retrieved the mutated black spider’s compound eye, a spiritual ingredient lacking Beyonder characteristics.

Ludwig immediately glanced up at Lumian.

“Can you eat this?” Lumian flicked the black compound eye.

Ludwig vigorously nodded.

“Yes.”

Intrigued, Lumian took out the Mystery Prying Glasses and inquired, “Can you eat this?”

“Not yet,” Ludwig honestly replied.

Not yet. In other words, perhaps in the future? Lumian stowed away the Mystery Prying Glasses and placed the mutated black spider’s compound eye on the dining table before him.

“I’d like you to translate something. If you can provide the correct answer, it’s yours for consumption.”

Ludwig gulped and agreed, “Okay.”

Lumian recalled Lato Guiaro’s strange pronunciation and emitted a chattering sound.

Finally, he said, “That’s the general idea.”

Ludwig shook his head in disappointment.

“I don’t know.”

He paused briefly before adding, “But I think I’ve heard it somewhere. It’s somewhat familiar.”

Had most of his memories and knowledge been sealed when his Body of Heart and Mind was sealed? Under Ludwig’s reluctant gaze, Lumian returned the mutated black spider’s compound eye to his Traveler’s Bag.

Ludwig shoved a mouthful of potato omelet into his mouth and mumbled, “If you can find a creature that understands this language for me to eat, I can translate for you.”

Wh… Lumian asked in surprise, “Can you acquire a certain ability or knowledge by consuming something?”

“There’s a time limit, and it depends on the specific situation,” Ludwig succinctly explained without elaborating.

Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

“Were you able to reveal information about the Batings Black Insect because you had consumed that kind of insect shortly before?”

Ludwig nodded. “Yes, it wanted to ambush me. It had been waiting for a long time.”

That explains it. I had thought you had recovered some of your memories and knowledge. Indeed, a paralyzing attack wouldn’t only target Lugano. After all, this could turn into a trap at any moment… Lumian stood up and left the dining table, returning to the master bedroom under Ludwig’s pitiful gaze.

He had no means to find Ludwig a creature that understood the Language of the Sea. The Fisheries Guild members couldn't be certain if their interpretation was accurate.

After entering the master bedroom and closing the door, Lumian lowered his voice and said, "Temiboros, do you understand that language? Do you know the true meaning of that sentence?"

Termiboros's majestic voice echoed in Lumian's ears.

"In any case, it doesn't mean 'We espouse thee, O sea, as a sign of true and perpetual dominion.'"

With that, Termiboros fell silent again, showing no intention of explaining the true meaning to Lumian.

Dammit, might as well not answer! You confirmed my guess but didn't unveil the true content! Heh heh, could it be that you're just pretending to understand? Lumian cursed inwardly, feeling that Termiboros, the Angel of Inevitability, was becoming less direct and straightforward than before. He didn't comprehend the art of sophistry.

Gradually, He learned how to infuriate!

Lumian composed himself and settled back into the armchair. Unfolding the letter, he began writing to Madam Magician.

Detailing his travels, he recounted what he had observed in Port Santa. Finally, he pieced together the pronunciation and wrote down the words to the unknown language. He gave the interpretation of what the Fisheries Guild believed: "We espouse thee, O sea, as a sign of true and perpetual dominion." Then, he made a request: Madam, have you encountered this language before? Do you know its true meaning?"

After folding the letter, Lumian initiated a ritual and summoned the "doll" messenger.

The "doll" messenger, adorned in a light-gold dress, emerged from the candle's flame and surveyed its surroundings. In a menacing tone, it declared, "Don't let that filthy child near me!"

"He's dining outside. He won't enter without my permission." For some reason, Lumian sensed hidden fear in the "doll" messenger's aggressive words.

The messenger nodded in satisfaction.

"Keep an eye on it! If it acts up, don't feed it!"

Using it as a substitute name… Lumian smiled and said, "If I don't feed him, something even more terrifying might happen."

The messenger fell silent for a moment before saying,

“Then feed it more!”

With that, the doll-like messenger swiftly withdrew the folded letter into the candle flame.

Lumian concluded the ritual, extinguished the candle’s flame, and gazed at the master bedroom’s door. He muttered to himself, It’s indeed a dangerous sealed creature…

He then retrieved the golden pocket watch from Salle de Bal Brise and opened it to take a look.

Suddenly, he transformed into a shadow, seamlessly blending into the darkness.

There was still something to attend to tonight.

…

In the port district, atop the Fisheries Guild’s castle-like building, Lumian found Lato Guiaro waiting on the spot resembling a tower, dressed in a formal suit.

“Are you on duty tonight?” Lumian casually pressed down on his golden straw hat, as if engaging in casual conversation with a friend.

Lato, the middle-aged man, sighed and said, “Originally, no, but since you wanted to come over, that’s the case. We can’t let an old man like the president do it, right?”

Without further ado, Lumian conjured delayed crimson, nearly white fireballs and hurled them into various corners of the tower.

Having completed this task, he waved at Lato Guiaro and melted back into the shadows.

Lato approached the tower’s entrance, clenching his fists in fear.

In just 30 seconds, the crimson, nearly white fireballs exploded simultaneously.

Rumble!

The entire tower became engulfed in flames, and Lato, stationed at the entrance, was sent flying by the shockwave.

Bright scales had already surfaced on his body to mitigate the damage.

Rumble!

In less than half an hour, everyone in Port Santa who was well-informed learned something: the Fisheries Guild had been bombed!

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Chapter 566 - 566 Gathered Clues

566 Gathered Clues

566 Gathered Clues

Solow Motel.

Lumian gazed at the red flames in the port district, tuning in to the distant commotion, anticipating potential visitors.

Before long, a knock echoed on the door.

Lumian didn't wait for Lugano to wake up. He pivoted and strode to the door.

The moment he swung it open, Noelia, clad in brown leather armor and a wimple, stood before him.

Noelia's expression was as cold as ice. She abruptly raised her hand and uttered ancient Hermes words, "Imprison!"

Lumian found himself instantly immobilized. Transparent walls or a viscous liquid seemed to encase him, turning him into an insect trapped in amber.

In the next second, Noelia unsheathed a straight sword from her back.

Simultaneously, Lumian's pants tightened, as if he had grown taller and more robust. An explosive force emanated from his body.

The transparent "amber" restraining him creaked, revealing invisible cracks.

With a whoosh, Noelia clutched the hilt of her straight sword with both hands, slicing through the air, carving through the already shaky "prison," aiming for Lumian's head.

Lumian's right fist, ready to strike, collided with the side of the straight sword, a condensed crimson, almost white flame accompanying the impact.

Amidst a deep and controlled explosion, the straight sword slanted, grazing the door frame as it descended to the ground.

Taking advantage of the situation, Noelia retreated, sheathed her sword, and inquired in Intisian, "Were you the one who blew up the Fisheries Guild?"

Upon witnessing this, Lumian refrained from retaliation. His body returned to its normal state as he smiled and replied, “It doesn’t matter if I blew it up. What matters is whether anyone can prove it.”

He understood that Noelia had issued a warning and wasn’t truly targeting him. Otherwise, she would have employed other Beyonder powers after the “Imprison” instead of slashing with her sword.

Noelia, upholding the dignity of maintaining order in Port Santa throughout the year, used a questioning tone typical for various suspects.

“Why did you go to such lengths? Why did you cause such a commotion?”

Lumian turned his head, signaling Lugano, who had awakened at the commotion, to return to sleep in the servant’s room.

Walking toward the recliner in the living room, he ignored Noelia’s question and smiled.

“I’ve discovered something.”

“Like what?” Noelia entered the suite and closed the wooden door behind her.

Lumian motioned toward the divan.

“Let’s have a seat and talk. I wouldn’t want you accusing me of being impolite.”

Noelia glanced at Lumian and grinned.

“What kind of politeness is there without greeting me by pressing your cheek against mine?”

Her demeanor was direct.

Lumian eased into the recliner and responded to the question, “For instance, last year’s sea prayer ritual failed.”

Noelia didn’t display surprise. She sat on the edge of the divan, leaning forward slightly to avoid the straight sword on her back from jabbing her.

“What else?”

Lumian pondered for a moment and casually remarked, “Also, the sea prayer ritual is a marriage to the sea.

“Furthermore, the Governor of the Sea is the husband of the sea, and the Maidens of the Sea embody the sea in the real world.

“Whether it’s the Governor of the Sea or the Maidens of the Sea, the offspring they bear are the Children of the Sea. The first one possesses the purest

bloodline…”

Though Lumian was well aware that the offspring of the women the Governor of the Sea had slept with were descendants of the sea, whether they were Maidens of the Sea or not, with his profound mystical knowledge and extraordinary insights, he couldn’t help but consider that the Governor of the Sea having his children on his own was also part of the equation.

Phew, as expected, the more you know, the easier it is to be corrupted. I wouldn’t have thought so in the past… Lumian sighed inwardly. Noelia, in surprise and admiration, sighed.

“You’ve made faster progress in your investigation than I anticipated. Most of it pieced together in such a short time.”

It’s been quite a while. My Language Comprehension charm will expire tomorrow. I wonder how much I’ll retain from this enhanced week of study… Lumian grinned and teased, “Don’t tell me you think my reputation as a great adventurer was just boasting?”

“Claiming a bounty of 300,000 gold risot for the Demon Warlock certainly isn’t a boast,” Noelia diplomatically acknowledged, indicating she didn’t underestimate someone capable of hunting down such a target.

Content, she nodded and continued, “While many Beyonders wield impressive abilities, their intelligence often falls short. They revel in belligerence and flaunt their might, but you’re not one of them.

“Still, I must caution you not to push too far. Despite understanding your true motive for stirring up this commotion, we must uphold peace and order in Port Santa. Don’t make things difficult for us.”

Coupled with the warning, the implication is that you shouldn’t disrupt Port Santa’s current situation. You’re free to investigate the sea prayer ritual, but stirring up trouble with the Fisheries Guild is a no-go. What exactly does your Church of Earth Mother aim for? It seems like there’s a mixed desire—both wanting and not wanting some actions to be taken… Lumian contemplated Noelia’s hint, a smile playing on his lips as he spoke, “If you had been more forthcoming, I wouldn’t have had to work this hard.”

Noelia offered a polite yet awkward smile.

“We lack extensive intel. All I can say is the Church allows the sea prayer ritual and the Fisheries Guild to obtain power from the sea for a reason, unrelated to our ability to solve it.

“I’m not privy to the reason—perhaps the Archbishop or our Fertility Order president could shed light.”

Lumian scoffed and said, “Then why allow my investigation of the sea prayer ritual?”

With a sigh, Noelia replied, “Do we need to know? We didn’t pry into your true motives for probing the ritual, did we?”

With that, the combat nun swiftly rose from the sofa, striding purposefully towards the suite’s door.

After a few steps, she halted, a thoughtful expression crossing her face.

“There are ancient traces concealed in the basement of the Governor of the Sea’s residence in Milo Village. They might unveil something crucial. It’s best to seize an opportunity to investigate.”

In the subterranean chamber beneath the Governor of the Sea’s residence? According to Franca’s account, Milo Village’s ancestors had left behind symbols and patterns. Does Noelia suggest these hold vital information? Is the reason for the Church of Earth Mother knowingly allowing the occurrence of the sea prayer ritual hidden in that chamber?

If Juan Oro isn’t deceptive or concealing the truth, and isn’t engaging in foul play, doesn’t that imply that the Earth Mother Church possesses a deeper understanding of Milo Village’s ancestors than their own descendants? It makes sense. After all, they once obliterated Milo Village and eradicated the faction of those ancestors. Over the past thousand years, there has been no disruption in the legacy, maintaining a prominent position in the real world. Lumian observed Noelia’s departure without pressing further.

As he returned to the master bedroom, preparing for sleep, the “doll” messenger dropped a folded piece of paper, swiftly departing without a greeting.

Ludwig isn’t that repulsive, except for being a bit ravenous and devouring everything, right?

Uh, Madam Magician does tend to stay up late. She’s quickest with her replies at night… Lumian muttered under his breath as he picked up the response.

Swiftly unfolding it, he scanned the contents.

“Your performance in Port Santa has been impressive thus far.

“I won’t interfere or provide excessive guidance. This is a prime chance for you to further digest the Conspirer potion.

“I’ve roughly reconstructed that sentence and read it multiple times. It’s not in any language I know presently, but what I can confirm is its lack of natural power. However, it possesses a certain energy—language can possess such energy.

“What does this imply? It means that during the sea prayer ritual, it can’t serve as a sacrificial language or communicate with Beyonder items—in simpler terms, the sea.

“So why does the sea prayer ritual work? The key may lie within the ceremonial ring. There’s a high chance it has a distinct appearance, peculiar patterns, strong spirituality, and embedded knowledge. The sentence relies on its pronunciation, structure, and energy to activate the ring, making it functional.

“If you can recreate the ring’s state after the vigil ritual, I’m confident I can decode its specific effects and approximate meaning.”

That makes sense. When Lato Guiaro recited the words ‘We espouse thee, O sea…’ there were no indications of natural power being invoked. It must serve a different purpose… Lumian gained a deeper understanding of the sea sacrificial segment after reading Madam Magician’s explanation.

Most of the clues seemed to await his infiltration of the Governor of the Sea’s residence.

…

The next morning, Lugano led Ludwig through the streets, grabbing breakfast according to the boy’s cravings.

Out of nowhere, someone hurriedly passed by, head lowered, and seemingly slipped, accidentally bumping into him.

Lugano smoothly shifted his body, preventing the person from making contact.

He went the extra mile, helping the individual up and hypocritically saying, “Be careful.”

The man quickly pressed something into Lugano’s hand,

muttered an apology, and seamlessly melted into the crowd.

Lugano glanced down at his palm, revealing a crumpled white post-it note.

Unrushed, he didn’t immediately read the note. After securing breakfast for Ludwig, he returned to Solow Motel and briefed Lumian.

Lumian took the crumpled note, unfolding it with a nonchalant gesture.

In delicate handwriting, it conveyed: “After last year’s ritual, the sea experienced an anomaly.”

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Chapter 567 - 567 Possible Leaker

567 Possible Leaker

The failure of the sea prayer ritual last year caused an anomaly in the sea? Lumian couldn't help but interpret it that way after going through the contents.

Studying the note in his hand, a familiar fragrance wafted to him.

After some thought, Lumian recalled the source: the Paco family's Madame Giorgia's perfume.

Were they inexperienced or intentionally leaving a trace, implying the Paco family as the source of this information? Lumian mused to himself, recalling the sudden appearance of a humanoid lizard in the Paco family, the severe injuries to Rubió Paco's mother Martha, and the peculiarities surrounding them.

Is the core issue the sea's abnormality? Has it weakened the Paco family's Beyonders, causing an ordinary person without sea lineage to transform into a humanoid lizard? Perhaps they don't want other sea spawn to know and were lacking the strength to handle the humanoid lizard, thus seeking foreign adventurers to resolve it? Lumian gained a new insight into the contradictions within the Paco family's commission.

Lato Guiaro and Juan Oro hadn't mentioned the sea's anomaly.

They only noted the sea's increased violence without the ritual's appeasement, the frequent departure of Death Navigators from their territory, and the declining strength of the Children of the Sea.

From their perspective, this situation seemed normal, foreseeable, and unrelated to any anomaly.

Did the anomaly solely affect the Paco family, or did Juan Oro, Lato Guiaro, and others intentionally conceal this matter? Are they guarding against each other? Lumian speculated as he watched the note consumed by crimson flames in his palm.

He leaned toward the latter possibility. If the Paco family wasn't unique, the sea's anomaly should have widespread effects, not solely targeting them.

This understanding shed light on Rubió Paco's disdain when speaking of the Maidens of the Sea.

Discovering the truth about the Maidens of the Sea and his true lineage likely filled him with self-loathing and contempt for the entire sea prayer ritual. He'd rather forfeit his family's inheritance than marry another Maiden of the Sea. When the sea anomaly affected the entire Paco family, these emotions reached their zenith.

Lumian's suspicion grew that Nolfi's covert ally might be Rubió Paco.

Regardless, given the Paco family's resources and status, they could lead a comfortable life even without the sea prayer ritual.

Lugano stood to the side, observing his employer as Lumian delved into deep thought after reading the note. A twinge of nervousness and fluster crossed Lugano's demeanor.

Is something about to unfold again?

Lumian glanced up at Lugano, his expression pensive.

"Though I haven't reached Highlander proficiency, I've mastered the daily words I need. My body language suffices for a normal life in Port Santa. Plus, the folks I'll be dealing with know Intisian.

"I can settle the remaining balance now and offer you a free 'teleport' back to Trier."

Instinctively, Lugano shook his head.

"You can't attend to Ludwig when you're in action. If I leave now, who'll keep an eye on him?"

It's unclear who's watching whom… Lumian stared at Lugano for a brief moment, sensing, for the first time, an unsettling undertone in the interpreter's demeanor.

Despite prior attacks and potential risks, there was an inexplicable resistance to the suggestion of terminating the employment contract and taking his offer for a safe departure!

It wouldn't even cost him a verl d'or!

Considering Lugano's typical behavior and personality, Lumian assumed he would readily accept the remaining payment and leave Port Santa. Reality, however, proved otherwise.

Perhaps Lugano himself doesn't understand the rationale behind his decision. It is just an "instinctive" choice… Lumian nodded subtly, opting not to press further on settling the final payment and terminating their employment contract.

…

In Milo Village, within the Oro family's extensively renovated ancestral house, Juan Oro lounged by the window, puffing on a hookah, his gaze fixed on the sun dipping below the horizon, casting an orange glow. His thoughts drifted to the impending sea prayer ritual, just over a week away.

Abruptly, he turned his head, eyeing a shadow near the door.

The darkness stirred, and a man with green eyes, sporting a golden straw hat, white shirt, and black vest, emerged—the adventurer, Louis Berry.

"Why are you here again?" Juan Oro sighed, switching to Intisian.

Lumian chuckled, dragging a chair into the sun's waning rays.

"I've got another inquiry and a heads-up about a particular operation."

Juan's eyes narrowed.

"What scheme are you plotting now?"

"Tonight, I intend to infiltrate the Governor of the Sea's residence. If I go unnoticed, I'll observe the rooms where the vigil ritual is conducted. If discovered, I'll make a swift exit. This fits my radical persona and purported motives, doesn't it? It'll deflect suspicion from our covert collaboration," Lumian disclosed, a hint of a smile in his explanation.

Juan Oro harbored an unexplained sense of threat from Louis Berry, yet he found no tangible evidence. Despite this, Lumian's words resonated with an unsettling logic.

He drew a deep drag from his hookah in silence before he spoke.

"What are you getting at?"

Lumian smiled.

"I'm curious to see the ring that marries the sea, its intricate engravings, and the patterns it bears.

"I know you've only crafted the ring mold and haven't completed the ritual to infuse it with something special. However, after serving as deputy host 11 times and assisting even more, I'm confident you've memorized the patterns, symbols, and structure."

Juan Oro stiffened, his tone turning icy.

"What's your motive?"

The room's afterglow, touched by the setting sun, dimmed suddenly, as if being pulled into another dimension.

Unfazed, Lumian responded, “Why all the secrecy? Haven’t you heard that the ring’s design, patterns, and structure have long been exposed?”

Juan Oro’s eyes narrowed.”When did this happen?”

Lumian arched an eyebrow.

“Didn’t my companion inform you of the true reason behind the sea prayer ritual failure?”

“He merely confirmed the fake Iru on the ship.” Juan Oro had his suspicions.

Lumian grinned, shaking his head. He began unraveling his deductions, starting with the custom-made fake ring in Torres and the orchestrated lamb sacrifice sent to the ship after a bribe.

Juan Oro held his silence, his countenance growing darker.

After a tense pause, he spoke in a hoarse tone, “Not many are privy to the intricacies of the Ring of the Sea Queen, and the fact that sea spawn seldom inspect the sacrificial offerings’ entrails. Each of them, the Children of the Sea, veterans of countless core rituals, are still alive… Iru and Salah were oblivious…”

As Juan Oro’s words, spoken through gritted teeth, reached Lumian’s ears, a sudden realization dawned upon him.

Ultraman is affiliated with the Fisheries Guild, a Child of the Sea endowed with numerous powers and a distinct status!

There’s also the possibility that he’s manipulated such an individual, establishing a clandestine “partnership.”

Without such a connection, how could April Fool’s possess precise details about the ceremonial ring’s appearance and exploit the sea prayer ritual’s “supervisory” loophole?

Even though I Know Someone mentioned that Ultraman is a Sun pathway Beyonder, it doesn’t rule out his identity as a Child of the Sea. Transforming into a Child of the Sea first and then drinking the Sun pathway’s potion shouldn’t pose an issue. The power of the Child of the Sea resonates with the cosmos, and the Sun and the cosmos are inherently compatible. Is April Fool’s true motive for disrupting the sea prayer ritual preparations related to Ultraman or his collaborator aiming to fully control the power or the palace at the bottom of the sea? Lumian’s thoughts gradually clarified.

He looked at Juan Oro with a relaxed smile and remarked, “If there wasn’t a mole, how could the sea prayer ritual be disrupted so easily?”

Juan Oro had harbored similar suspicions for the past year; Lumian’s words were irrefutable.

After some contemplation with an unpleasant expression, Juan Oro composed himself and stated, “I have to uncover the traitor before the official sea sacrifice…”

At this point, Juan Oro turned his gaze to Lumian.

“I might need your cooperation on something when the time comes.”

Oh, you’re fishing too? Lumian replied with a smile, “No problem.”

Juan Oro set down his hookah and left his seat.

He walked to the desk, retrieved a pen and paper, and began sketching.

Nearly ten minutes later, the old man staggered to Lumian and handed him the paper.

Lumian glanced at it and recognized six designs—representing the front, left, right, back, front, and inner parts of the Ring of the Sea Queen. Each design featured intricate and mystifying symbols and patterns.

“It’s actually useless for you to obtain it. It won’t have any effect,” Juan Oro said in a low, raspy voice. “The corresponding sea spawn have to use their special abilities to inscribe them on the ring and corrode them for six hours to please the sea and gain her recognition.”

Lumian nodded and replied,”I have no intention of replicating one.”

He was obtaining it solely to send to Madam Magician for interpretation.

He then asked, “Is this the ring-making segment of the vigil ritual? Is there no other step?”

“There’s another step. An assistant host will take the ring to the basement and place it in front of the patterns and symbols representing our ancestors for an hour. This is a show of respect to our ancestors, like greeting the elders before a wedding,” Juan Oro explained briefly.

After a moment of contemplation, Lumian responded, “Can you also draw the patterns and symbols representing your ancestors?”

Juan Oro returned to the desk.

This time, he completed it in just two minutes.

Lumian took it and noticed scattered lines and arcs. Many details were missing from the middle, making it impossible to discern its original appearance.

“Seeing it in person might allow you to make connections easier.” Juan Oro sighed again.

Lumian nodded.

“Then I’ll infiltrate the Governor of the Sea’s residence tonight.”

Juan Oro tersely acknowledged his words.

“Be careful of the sea spawn there. They have their own specialties. They might not be very strong, but they can counter certain abilities of yours.”

…

Late at night, under the crimson moonlight, Lumian appeared near the cathedral-like building.

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Chapter 568 - 568 Patterns of the “Ancestors”

568 Patterns of the “Ancestors”

Lumian swiveled his head towards the docks, his body seamlessly blending into the shadows beyond the moonlight’s reach.

Following the shadowy path, he smoothly bypassed the guards at the entrance, slipping into the sacred-looking building without a sound.

In the foyer, he came to a sudden halt.

Amidst the dark “fishnets,” he spotted short figures with oddly large heads, bulging eyes, and wrinkled skin – like elders in miniature. Standing just over a meter tall, they were the “Little Devils” mentioned by Juan Oro, a species of sea spawn.

Infiltrating the shadows, these Little Devils patrolled the Governor of the Sea’s residence, using their unique abilities to prevent any unauthorized entry.

Having encountered them before, Lumian knew these Little Devils weren’t formidable opponents. Despite their talent for blending into shadows and creating illusions, he could dispatch a team with ease.

Yet, eliminating them discreetly posed a challenge. Lumian couldn’t be certain that dealing with one group of Little Devils wouldn’t stir up trouble and alert other creatures lurking in the building.

Focused, Lumian surveyed the areas untouched by shadows. In the crimson moonlight, he discerned vague figures drifting in the void, intermittently appearing and disappearing.

These were fish adorned in dark-gray armor, their bulging eyes resembling meatballs at both ends. Starlight-threaded “thin threads” peeked through the gaps in their scale-like armor.

The peculiar fish hovered in the air, scattering across different regions. Occasionally, they released bubbles carrying formless storms and impalement-inducing cracks.

Erupting bubbles created countless invisible spikes, setting perilous traps for teleporting “guests.”

At the hall intersection and various aisles, silent three-man guard teams patrolled. Their expressions betrayed nothing, but Lumian noticed slender black insects, covered in bristles, emerging from their necks and mouths.

After a brief inspection, the Batings Black Insects swiftly retracted into the guards' bodies.

The eyes of sea creature statues on the wall appeared alive, scanning the areas with a strange awareness.

Just as Juan Oro said, there are a large number of different sea spawn here. Infiltrating silently amidst the diverse sea spawn here proves to be a formidable task. Lumian, patient, opted to remain in the foyer, awaiting the right moment.

In under two minutes, a thunderous bang reverberated from the dock.

Crimson flames shot into the sky, casting an eerie glow on nearby windows, making them quiver.

Little Devils lurking in the shadows, Armored Monster Fish manipulating the surrounding void, Batings Black Insects orchestrating guards, and peculiar creatures concealed in the statues' eyes—all instinctively shifted their focus to the glass window near the dock.

Lumian sprang into action.

He orchestrated the disturbance with a delayed explosion!

Seizing the opportunity, he stealthily navigated through the shadows surrounding the Little Devils and skirted the region patrolled by the Armored Monster Fish.

Before other sea spawn could react, he pinpointed the room at the far end of the hall, relying on Juan Oro's intel.

A dim light emitted from the black mark on his right shoulder as he swiftly reached the door of the target room. In a blink, he transformed into a shadow, slipping through the crack.

Inside, Lumian discovered intricate patterns and symbols etched on the floor, ceiling, and walls, reminiscent of magnified versions of Juan Oro's hand-

drawn sacrificial ring pattern.

Besides that, nothing else caught his eye.

Lumian deduced, During the vigil ritual, some sea spawn enter this place, condense the patterns from every direction, and carve them into the ring mold. Then, they infuse them with special energy. Quickly scanning the area, he stepped out of the shadows, activating a black mark on his chest.

Nearly invisible water ripples danced on the surrounding walls, then subsided.

Bottle of Fiction!

Lumian “enclosed” the two connected rooms into the Bottle of Fiction. The entry requirement: ordinary humans.

He positioned himself near the opening of the Bottle of Fiction, deliberately creating loud footsteps as he hid by the door.

Almost instantly, certain sea spawn picked up on the disturbance.

Recalling the explosion at the docks and the towering flames, they realized they had fallen into a diversion.

Summoning the Armored Monster Fish, Batings Black Insects, Little Devils, and their cohorts, they ordered an investigation into the ring-making ritual venue for potential infiltrators.

Despite attempts to rush in through the door, the sea spawn inexplicably found themselves back in the hall.

The Armored Monster Fish, discerning the issue, released bubbles with a formless storm toward the entrance of the Bottle of Fiction.

As before they surged towards him, aiming to breach the room, Lumian, now a shadow creature, slipped through the crack at the base of the wooden door, quietly exiting the Bottle of Fiction and returning to the hall.

His ploy successfully diverted the sea spawn’s attention, creating a chance for him to change positions.

Naturally, he needed to employ effective tactics a few more times!

Anticipating the enemy’s disbelief in encountering the same trick repeatedly within a short span, Lumian knew they would assume there were alternative plans.

Of course, on the third attempt, heightened vigilance would set in. Everything they saw would seem like a distraction. When the moment arrived, Lumian could flip the strategy.

Seizing the moment when the sea spawn fixated on the Bottle of Fiction, Lumian deftly avoided the gathering of Little Devils. He circled the Armored Monster Fish, reaching a corner of the hall, and once again utilized Spirit World Traversal.

This time, Lumian’s destination was the staircase leading to the basement.

The guards, lured into the hall, left the area unmonitored.

As Lumian's silhouette appeared at the staircase entrance, he swiftly transformed into a shadow, slipping into the basement through the darkness.

No guards or sea spawn patrolled this seemingly unimportant area, an area that was merely a testament to the villagers of Milo Village's reverence for their ancestors.

In his shadow creature form, Lumian possessed "natural" night vision. Even without a fireball, he could vaguely discern the dark basement.

Despite its dampness due to proximity to the sea, the absence of a moldy odor was thanks to the various Beyonder powers within the building.

At the center stood a decrepit stone platform, reminiscent of an altar for ancestor worship. Surrounding it were signs of destruction, leaving only disjointed lines, arcs, and indistinct patterns.

Do these fragmented symbols and patterns constitute the coat of arms of Milo Village's ancestors? Or do they possess mystical effects? Lumian scrutinized them repeatedly, struggling to reconstruct the undamaged version in his mind.

Yet, he sensed that since Noelia of the Fertility Order had alluded to the revealing nature of these symbols and patterns, he might extract valuable information.

What kind of information could it be? Maintaining his shadow creature form, Lumian extended into the darkness, surveying his surroundings.

Frowning, he whispered, Could it be that the Church of Earth Mother, fully capable of obliterating this place, deliberately left traces? Does this imply that the sea prayer ritual holds some influence over them too?

Lumian directed his gaze at the stone platform, the sacrificial offering to the ancestors, recalling Juan Oro's details about the ring-making ritual.

After crafting the Ring of the Sea Queen, it would rest here for an hour as a mark of respect to their ancestors.

Was it placed on this partially collapsed altar? Approaching the grayish-black stone platform, Lumian observed no dust accumulation. All remaining lines converged on an empty space at the center of the circle.

His heart stirred as he retrieved a Louis d'or, placing it in the center of the altar.

Nothing happened.

Undeterred, Lumian replaced the Louis d'or with gold risot, Mystery Prying Glasses, Flog boxing gloves, and various other items.

Yet, still no anomaly.

Persistence drove him. Lumian pulled out the silver Lie earring from his pocket and positioned it on an empty space on the stone platform.

In the next moment, a surreal sensation enveloped Lumian.

Within the stone platform, illusory lines and arcs materialized, intertwining with remnants to form two distinct patterns:

One pattern featured layers of doors sketched with simple strokes, while the other resembled a clock divided into twelve sectors, albeit having a single hand.

Lumian observed keenly, sensing something adhering to the Lie earring.

In an instant, the lines from the stone platform dimmed, retracted, and returned to their original positions. Normalcy resumed.

Are these the patterns representing Milo Village's ancestors? Or did they gain knowledge from the initial revelations? Lumian sensed sea spawn surging toward the basement. After muttering to himself, he seized the Lie earring and "teleported" away.

…

In the master bedroom of the suite at Solow Motel.

As Lumian's figure manifested, he settled down and began writing to Madam Magician. Unfazed by checking the changes in the Lie earring, he intended to send it to his Major Arcana card holder for inspection.

Recreating the patterns, symbols, structure, and various scenes from the Governor of the Sea's residence, Lumian neatly folded several letters, arranged a ritual, and summoned the "doll" messenger.

Then, he patiently awaited the reply.

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Chapter 569 - 569 Language Interpretation

569 Language Interpretation

The crimson moonlight seeped through the not-so-thick curtains, casting its glow on the desk, already yellowed by the gas wall lamp's illumination, emphasizing its presence.

Lumian perused his freshly acquired Highlander textbook, patiently waiting for over half an hour before finally receiving a reply from Madam Magician via the "doll" messenger.

The letter was concise and spanned only two pages.

"Let's start with the basics.

"Combining the patterns, symbols, and structure of the ring—although I can't precisely decipher the meaning of that sentence—I can identify its composition and the practical application of various short sentences.

"It breaks down into three segments:

"The first part serves to precisely locate the ring, facilitating the subsequent activation of special characteristics and the infusion of energy contained in the language.

"The second part involves injecting the energy carried by the words into the ring through resonance and other forms, activating a magic circle formed by patterns and symbols. Consider the sacrificial ring as a charm. The second paragraph is akin to its designated special activation incantation. It doesn't necessitate invoking supernatural powers but requires prior guidance.

"In the third part, I suspect it's a ciphertext attached to the ring. In simpler terms, once the ceremonial ring is fully activated through the first two parts, it records and carries the final ciphertext into the sea to transmit it to something.

"Are you following so far? The ceremonial ring is like a special key, functional only after activation. Furthermore, it necessitates the corresponding password to open the 'doors' of the target.

"Heh heh, the actual meaning of 'We espouse thee, O sea, as a sign of true and perpetual dominion' is roughly akin to 'a key to unlock the passageway. The password is XXXXXXXXX.' Naturally, if translated directly, it'll differ

significantly, but that should capture the essence."

Lumian couldn't resist a smirk.

Recalling the solemn recitation by the previous Governors of the Sea, envisioning the act of marrying the sea, anyone familiar with the corresponding language would likely burst into laughter.

What sea, what espousal, what dominion! After all the complexity, it boiled down to unlocking and opening a passageway—a simple password entry!

Contemplating sharing this interpretation with Juan Oro, Lato Guiaro, and the others, Lumian pondered their likely reactions.

No, they wouldn't believe it. A millennium or two of misunderstanding had morphed into faith, perseverance, and legacy. Admitting a mistake wasn't something they'd easily embrace.

Regardless, the result would be the same. Interpretation or translation, it didn't matter how they perceived it!

Collecting himself, Lumian turned to the second page of the letter, eager to continue reading.

"Next is the more complicated part.

"The two patterns you witnessed in the Governor of the Sea's basement have a profound history, stretching back to the early Fourth Epoch.

"They serve as symbols of mysticism and the coat of arms of ancient nobles. One of them is linked to an acquaintance—no, a familiar Angel, Amon!

"The pattern resembling a clock signifies the Worm of Time. It stands as the Amon family's coat of arms."

Worm of Time? The Amons' coat of arms? Why is it Him again! Lumian's eyes narrowed, feeling as though he was still entrenched in the Amons.

What connection did Milo Village's ancestors, Port Santa's sea prayer ritual, and the distinctiveness of those waters share with the Amons?

On the surface, no apparent link existed!

As Lumian's thoughts raced, he suddenly sensed a connection between the sea prayer ritual and the former King of Angels of the Marauder pathway.

Reflecting on the key members involved in the April Fool's ritual prank, Bard, a Beyonder of the Marauder pathway, and Mad Lady, belonging to the neighboring Apprentice pathway, even prayed to The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth—a being with profound influence over the Marauder pathway.

While this didn't directly point to the Amons, the gathering of Marauder-

related individuals suggested a reasonable association between the sea prayer ritual and the Marauder pathway.

Lumian exhaled, lowering his head to read further insights from Madam Magician.

"The layers of doors come from the Abraham family. Yes, the Abraham family, one of the five nobles of the Tudor Empire. I previously mentioned that in the Tudor Empire, only five families hold the hereditary duke title: Abraham, Amon, Antigonus, Jacob, and Tamara. Among them, the Abrahams control the Apprentice pathway. Remember, Apprentices often represent seals.

"Therefore, it's plausible to believe that the sea prayer ritual predates previous estimates, tracing back to before the demise of the Fourth Epoch's Tudor Empire. Encountering matters related to the Tudor Empire sure isn't a coincidence for you, is it?

"Do you now grasp the essence of the sea prayer ritual? Further explanations may not be necessary, correct?

"I'm starting to suspect that Milo Village's ancestors misunderstood the initial sentence's meaning, leading to the expansion of the sea sacrifice and vigil from the revelation. This resulted in an absurd sea marriage ritual spanning a millennium or two. It could very well be a manifestation of that individual's mischievous nature, reveling in playing a joke on everyone, indifferent to the fate of others.

"See, this is what a prank should be. Those April Fool's folks could learn a thing or two.

"If you have more questions or haven't clarified certain aspects, feel free to write and ask.

"By the way, Lie now possesses a temporary ability lasting half a month. It can absorb a specific amount of power from a target, though this power won't endure long. For ordinary people, it might persist for half a year or a year. However, for you, it won't last more than a week due to the conflict with your powers."

Lumian averted his gaze from the letter, his thoughts in disarray.

Madam Magician suggests that the uniqueness of those waters originated from the ancestor of the Abraham family and a certain Amon? The core of the sea prayer ritual was personally devised by these two Angel-level figures. They guided the ancestors of Milo Village in Port Santa and left behind a revelation, compelling them to perform the ritual annually?

Due to Amon's mischievous nature, the ancestors of Milo Village misunderstood the true meaning of that sentence, thinking they were meant to marry the sea. Consequently, the core of the sea prayer ritual became increasingly complex,

expanding into more segments over the years. It transformed into an extensive prank that persisted for over a millennium?

Having comprehended Madam Magician's hypothesis, Lumian reconsidered the essence of the sea prayer ritual.

Appeasing the special entity concealed at the bottom of the sea—perhaps that palace?

Apprentice represents a seal… Marauder is stealing…

Stealing…

Lumian suddenly glanced down at his left chest.

He grasped the essence of the sea prayer ritual!

Finding a husband for the sea, pacifying its violence, genuinely pleasing it, and obtaining corresponding boons were all absurd reasons concocted by Milo Village's ancestors after being misled!

The essence of the sea prayer ritual was to steal boons!

The "palace" at the bottom of the sea had been sealed by the Apprentice pathway, but the ancestor of the Abraham family worried that, over time, the seal's power would wane, allowing the "palace" to gradually regain strength. To counter this, he enlisted Amon to devise a ritual for regularly siphoning off the restored power of the palace each year, preventing it from breaking through the seal.

Consequently, after each sea prayer ritual, the sea area would become tranquil, free from excessive storms. The previous year's failed ritual had allowed the palace to accumulate a certain degree of strength. Consequently, the sea experienced abnormality, leading to an increased number of shipwrecks, and Death Navigators departed the special sea area more frequently.

The reason for only entering the sea when the stars aligned and following a specific route to reach the destination was that only then would a complex passageway appear in the outer seal!

Lumian stood up and took a few steps forward.

Having unraveled the essence of the sea prayer ritual, he comprehended the Earth Mother Church's motive for perpetuating it.

Initially, the clergyman of the Earth Mother Church, lacking thorough investigations, destroyed Milo Village, putting an end to the sea prayer ritual. However, at the bottom of the building, they discovered the coat of arms representing the two nobles of the Tudor Empire, halting the final step in time. Later, they realized they needed to dispatch demigod-level Saints to deal with the unique waters each year. High-end forces were required to guard it for an extended period, making it quite troublesome. Consequently, when the sea prayer ritual

resurfaced, they tacitly agreed to the reconstruction of Milo Village.

In most cases, the sea prayer ritual didn't adversely affect the innocent or disrupt local order. Every Governor of the Sea possessed a certain amount of the sea's bloodline, and while the Maidens of the Sea would eventually transform into humanoid lizards in their old age, they could alter their fates and enjoy power and wealth for 30 to 40 years or even longer.

For Maidens of the Sea seeking free love, the Church of Earth Mother likely tacitly consented or even aided their escape, as the chances of success were otherwise quite low.

So, why did the Fertility Order encourage me to investigate the sea prayer ritual? Why did Noelia provide some information while withholding crucial details? Lumian's confusion swiftly dissipated.

The real entity fishing behind the scenes was not the Fisheries Guild but the Church of Earth Mother!

The failure of last year's sea prayer ritual had alarmed the Church of Earth Mother, fearing a similar problem this year. Observing Louis Berry's inclination to investigate the sea prayer ritual, they encouraged him to do so, allowing potential saboteurs hidden in the shadows to contact him, surface, and capture them all at once!

Phew. Lumian exhaled, redirecting his focus to April Fool's.

Now, he was certain that April Fool's intended to break the seal around those special waters.

Last year marked the first step towards breaking the seal, but it hadn't progressed to the point where the underwater "palace" could breach it. This year, they would undoubtedly create a similar situation once again. Otherwise, if the sea prayer ritual succeeded, their pranks from last year would be in vain!

The question now was, what would the key members of April Fool's do? How could they seize the benefits represented by the palace and evade the corresponding dangers? Lumian stared at the gas wall lamp emitting a yellowish glow, sinking into deep thought.

…

More than a week quickly elapsed, and in the blink of an eye, the day of the sea prayer ritual arrived.

After completing his breakfast, Lumian heard the melodic tunes of various musical instruments wafting in from the street outside.

With a smile, he wiped his mouth with a napkin and strolled toward the window, welcoming the bright sunlight pouring in.

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Chapter 570 - 570 Festival

570 Festival

On Aquina Street, a two-story ceremonial boat crafted from wood, cardboard, and adorned with ribbons rolled forward, propelled by four sleek horses.

This intricate vessel mimicked the Governor of the Sea's boat, designed to economize materials and size, allowing horses to guide it through the city.

Eight men and eight women, dressed vibrantly, stood on both upper and lower levels of the flower boat. They sang and danced, their joy infecting the spectators on both sides of the street.

Port Santa's premier folk orchestra surrounded the ceremonial boat, playing rhythmic drumbeats and a variety of instruments such as clarinets, oboes, flutes, and strings.

The onlookers on the roadside were in high spirits, alternating between singing and following the ceremonial boat, hoping to catch a refreshing spray from the water droplets scattered by the sixteen men and women.

Observing the scene from the fifth floor of the Solow Motel, Lumian sensed that the sea prayer ritual had evolved beyond a mere sacrificial ceremony. Excluding its core aspects, it had transformed into a city-wide folklore festival.

Despite many residents of Port Santa being devout followers of the Earth Mother and not attributing spiritual significance to the sea, they embraced the festivities, dancing and celebrating on this special day.

As the flower boat concluded its tour of Aquina Street, Lumian turned to Lugano and remarked,

"Take good care of Ludwig today. No matter which celebration you attend, ensure he's with you."

"Yes, Boss," Lugano replied, influenced by the cheerful atmosphere of the sea prayer ritual, his emotions lifted.

Without wasting any time, Lumian snatched his golden straw hat, exited the suite, and descended the stairs.

In the lobby, his gaze fell upon Otta Guillaume, the Solow Motel owner, doling out cash to the lady at the front desk and the two attendants—two risot each.

“Is this a holiday bonus?” Lumian inquired in Intisian.

Otta Sr. chuckled and replied, “No bonus, just their compensation. They’re on duty at the motel today, keeping an eye on the place. They’ll miss out on the sea prayer ritual and other celebrations.

“I’m heading to the docks to see my little cabbage dance!”

“I’ll be there too,” Lumian said with a smile, embracing the festive ambiance once again.

If the sea prayer ritual lacked mystic elements, Lumian would have fully immersed himself in the festive atmosphere, reminiscent of the few years of Lent he experienced in Cordu.

Exiting the motel, Lumian leisurely strolled towards the harbor, taking note of Port Santa’s residents bedecked in their most glamorous and festive attire. At a glance, the streets appeared to be awash with a sea of colors.

His attire—a white shirt, black vest, and dark pants—made him stand out like a foreigner amidst the lively crowd.

Lumian adorned the golden straw hat, injecting a splash of color into his appearance.

The rhythmic chime of bicycle bells accompanied the passing of wooden crate-laden bicycles. Vendors energetically peddled popsicles of various flavors to eager citizens anticipating the sea dance and boat race.

Observing the two segments with a relaxed demeanor, Lumian savored the festivities. He patiently waited until the two-story festival boat, carrying the Governor of the Sea and the Maidens of the Sea, embarked on its journey to Milo Village before departing the port.

Choosing to abstain from other citizen-organized celebrations, Lumian sought refuge in a public washroom within the nearest department store, slipping into a cubicle.

Triggering the black mark on his right shoulder, Lumian materialized in a concealed corner of Milo Village.

Shifting into a shadow creature, he seamlessly infiltrated the Oro family’s blend of ancient and modern architecture, arriving at Juan Oro’s bedroom.

The president of the Fisheries Guild awaited Lumian’s arrival, and upon seeing the figure of the adventurer, Louis Berry, emerge from the darkness, Juan Oro, with deep wrinkles, gestured towards the unconscious Milo villagers on the floor.

“These are two of the four deputy hosts for the vigil and the sea sacrificial ritual. Choose one to assume his form.”

This condition was pivotal for Lumian's collaboration with Juan Oro. He sought continuous participation in the core sections of the sea prayer ritual.

Initially hesitant due to the inability to deceive other sea spawn and introduce a stranger onto the ship, Juan Oro only agreed to allow Lumian to infiltrate the Governor of the Sea's residence before the vigil ritual, observing it discreetly.

However, with Ultraman under suspicion as a key figure in the Fisheries Guild, Lumian seized the opportunity when Juan Oro required cooperation and assistance, showcasing the abilities of the Lie earring. Thus, Lumian devised a plan to disguise himself as a specific deputy host and gain access to the ship.

After studying one of the deputy hosts for a few moments, Lumian adorned a silver earring. He replicated the appearance of the chosen deputy host, seamlessly blending into his guise.

In no time, except for his clothing, there was no discernible difference between Lumian and the deputy host.

"It's my turn," Juan Oro said in a deep Intisian voice.

He decided to take on the guise of another deputy host and personally board the ship to avert any potential mishaps.

Concerned about Louis Berry's involvement in the sea sacrifice and wary of lurking enemies employing unknown methods to cause trouble, Juan Oro believed that everything would converge during the sea sacrifice segment. Boarding the boat covertly would enable him to address unforeseen circumstances in time, delivering a strategic "surprise."

Juan Oro harbored suspicions that Louis Berry might be an accomplice of last year's saboteurs, his prior actions serving as a ploy to deceive them and allow him to openly disrupt the ritual at a crucial moment.

Lumian casually tossed the Lie earring to Juan Oro, who proceeded to change into a dark-blue robe embroidered with various sea elements.

Upon donning the silver earring, Juan Oro experienced a remarkable control over every detail of his body.

Attempting to adjust the wrinkles on his face, he observed himself becoming ten to twenty years younger in the mirror.

Despite his potent and diverse Beyonder powers, the president of the Fisheries Guild couldn't help but marvel.

"How magical."

After completing his disguise, Lumian pointed at the unconscious deputy host.

“Who’s responsible for keeping an eye on them and preventing their appearance before the sea prayer ritual?”

“My wife,” Juan Oro replied, already prepared.

She, a former Maidens of the Sea and the current Matriarch of the Oro family, possessed considerable strength. While she hadn’t participated in any ring-

making rituals, she was a trusted individual who wouldn’t divulge secrets.

Lumian redirected the conversation, inquiring, “As the president of the Fisheries Guild, won’t you be suspected if you don’t wait for news of the successful sea prayer ritual with the other committee members?”

“No, I don’t go every year. I can also wait for news at home, and my wife will pretend to be me,” Juan Oro stated, pointing at Lie on his left ear and removing it.

After confirming the details, Lumian inquired further, “Have you investigated any of those who nearly died and came back to life, or have their personalities undergone a significant change?”

These individuals were key members of the Fisheries Guild familiar with the specific design of the Ring of the Sea Queen and the complete details of the sea prayer ritual.

According to Franca, every member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society was a soul from another world, having “resurrected” in recently deceased human bodies. This information could help identify who might be Ultraman.

Juan Oro slowly shook his head.

“No, at least not in my memory. Time was tight, so I couldn’t investigate them one by one.”

The rejuvenated elder, now appearing in his prime, continued, “Remember, your name is Brian now. My name is Jorge. If you don’t understand what others are saying later, it’s fine. I’ll hint at you. When you need to answer questions, I’ll help you.”

“Alright.” Lumian maintained the pretense of not knowing Highlander.

In reality, having extensively studied under the effects of the Language Comprehension charm, he had already mastered more words and grammar. While still unable to fully comprehend others’ words, he could grasp key words, tense, and the active and passive voice, allowing him to roughly understand the meaning. Expressing himself with short sentences and simple structures presented no challenge.

…

Clad in the dark-blue robe of a deputy host, Lumian entered the Governor of the Sea's residence, guided by Juan Oro, who no longer staggered. Passing through a hall adorned with sea creature statues, they reached the room where the Governor of the Sea maintained his vigil.

The current Governor of the Sea, Simon of the Guiaro family, was from a branch with a thin bloodline, unqualified to reside in the ancestral house.

At that moment, Simon sat cross-legged on the cold floor, suppressing his excitement. With half-closed eyes, he felt the moist air enveloping him.

Although Lumian refrained from activating his Spirit Vision, he sensed various sea spawn bustling in the shadows, the void, and the statues.

Juan Oro led Lumian out of the room, guiding him to the most secluded part of the building. Opening the wooden door to the servants' quarters, Juan Oro addressed the fake Governor of the Sea, Miguel, lying on the bed.

"Once the sea prayer ritual succeeds, you can leave, but you must depart Port Santa with the wealth you've amassed over the past year."

Miguel sat up excitedly. "Alright, alright!"

Though their conversation occurred in Highlander, Lumian grasped the essence.

After this exchange, Juan Oro translated the conversation for Lumian, emphasizing, "You can verify if I'm lying based on Miguel's expression."

Lumian silently pondered, thinking, So what if you're not lying? What you said might not be done… He then returned to the hall, assuming a cross-

legged position opposite the other two deputy hosts.

As time passed, midnight arrived, marking the completion of the Ring of the Sea Queen. One of the deputy hosts retrieved it and guided it to the basement in the dim moonlight.

The moment had come to pay homage to their ancestors.

Lumian observed the scene in silence and suddenly had a thought.

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Chapter 571 - 571 Key Details

571 Key Details

The Governor of the Sea's residence hall opened into a labyrinth of rooms, its scarcity of windows allowing only a trickle of light despite the crimson moon's glow. The dimness cast a cloak of silence over the place.

Even as the deputy host, clutching the coveted Ring of the Sea Queen, moved with caution, the floor still betrayed him with a faint echo.

Lumian observed him heading towards the basement staircase, a sudden realization dawning upon him.

Once in the basement, the deputy host could effortlessly switch the authentic Ring of the Sea Queen with a crafted counterfeit without alerting anyone.

The other deputies were occupied in the hall, and the Governor of the Sea, undergoing physical modifications, had the Maidens of the Sea by his side. The sea spawn were scattered elsewhere.

Frowning, Lumian shot a sidelong glance at another deputy host. He lowered his voice and addressed Jorge, the form Juan Oro had taken, in Intisian.

"Every year, during the vigil ritual, does a deputy host send the Ring of the Sea Queen alone to the basement, retrieving it an hour later?"

He stressed the word "alone."

Juan Oro nodded subtly.

"Yes. There's no need for extra protection in this building…"

But just as Juan Oro was about to continue, he halted abruptly.

This presented a golden opportunity to swap the Ring of the Sea Queen unnoticed.

The fact that external enemies couldn't breach the building didn't mean the deputy hosts within were without their own problems!

Lumian wasted no time and turned to Juan Oro, uttering, "Should I follow, or will you take charge?"

Juan Oro regarded the matter gravely, rising from his seat and responding, "I'll go."

Harnessing his abilities, he steadied himself and swiftly caught up with the deputy host. In a deep tone, he stated, “Let’s go together. I want to seize the chance to pay my respects to my ancestors.”

The other deputy host raised no objections.

As Lumian observed the two lighting their lanterns and descending into the basement, his mind instinctively filled in the upcoming sequence.

Place the Ring of the Sea Queen on the decrepit stone platform… Offer prayers to the ancestors… Return to the surface… Re-enter and retrieve it an hour later…

During that hour, the Ring of the Sea Queen sits unguarded in the basement, vulnerable to any opportunistic interference… If someone had concealed themselves there beforehand, swapping the genuine ring for a counterfeit would be a straightforward task…

Certainly, infiltrating and concealing oneself in this location is no simple feat. I can’t even do it; I could last a mere two minutes before being detected by the sea spawn…

The Ring of the Sea Queen has to be positioned on that worn stone platform. Any deviations—deviations…

With these thoughts swirling in his mind, Lumian suddenly recalled the transformations in the Lie earring when it rested on the weathered stone platform in the basement.

The Seer pathway item had activated a pattern embodying an Apprentice and a Marauder, granting it the ability to siphon someone’s power that lasted half a month!

Lie could accomplish this feat, but what about the Ring of the Sea Queen?

Though not an item of the Seer, Apprentice, or Marauder pathway, it had been meticulously crafted based on a ritual passed down by an Amon. Perhaps, over time, it could activate the unique characteristics of the basement, gradually assimilating with thieving qualities.

Yes! Considering that the essence of the sea sacrificial ritual involves extracting power from the seal at the bottom of the sea and claiming it, the Ring of the Sea Queen, being a key item, should not only be capable of loosening the seal to a certain extent but also possess the power-stealing ability. It could distribute the gains among various participants in the ritual—

the host receiving the most, followed by the Maidens of the Sea as assistant hosts, and the deputy hosts and sailors gaining some within the ritual’s range, provided they possessed similar powers!

In essence, Juan Oro and his companions' understanding of the ring-making ritual is incomplete. The "paying homage to the ancestors" segment is integral and crucial. Without honoring the ancestors, the sea sacrificial ritual would merely open the seal without stealing the accumulated power. Instead, it would erupt and disperse… Lumian had just marveled at the mysticism's terrifying complexity when a sudden alarm gripped him.

He realized he had overlooked a pivotal detail.

According to Madam Magician's interpretation of the Ring of the Sea Queen's functions and her speculations about the essence of the entire sea prayer ritual, the substitution of the genuine Ring of the Sea Queen with the fake ring customized by April Fool's in Torres should have prevented the catastrophic phenomenon of the sea's fury consuming the Governor of the Sea, all the deputy hosts, and some sailors in the subsequent ritual!

The fake ring hadn't undergone the initial ring-making ritual, leaving its patterns, symbols, and structure devoid of the necessary mysticism characteristics. Even if the Governor of the Sea recited the prescribed words, he couldn't infuse energy into it to open the seal!

As a complete counterfeit, it shouldn't have triggered any phenomena. However, due to its incapacity to extract the amassed power, the sea area would experience more shipwrecks, and the weather would deteriorate.

To align with the events of the previous year, the fake ring thrown by the Governor of the Sea had to complete the first part of the ring-making ritual. Still, without being placed in the basement to honor the ancestor, it could only partially open the seal, unable to extract and monopolize the gathered power. This incomplete process led to a sudden eruption, causing the sea to "rage"!

Lumian's eyes narrowed slightly. As a Conspirer, he had seized the core of the matter.

Two Rings of the Sea Queen were on the ship, but both were fakes.

The ring brought by the deputy host to the ritual ship was also a forgery. In fact, the authentic Ring of the Sea Queen hadn't made an appearance during last year's sea prayer ritual!

The genuine Ring of the Sea Queen, which had undergone the entire ring-

making ritual as per the Fisheries Guild's knowledge, hadn't been placed on the stone platform in the basement to fulfill the ritual of honoring the ancestors. Consequently, it was also a sham—a counterfeit ring lacking the most crucial effect!

The deputy host who had taken the Ring of the Sea Queen into the basement and retrieved it last year might also be part of the problem!

The peripheral members affiliated with April Fool's weren't considered trustworthy. Their actions likely didn't disrupt the overall plan. The fake ring concealed in the lamb's stomach and the Bard's performance likely served as preparations for subsequent investigations, camouflaging vital clues. As Lumian's thoughts raced, Juan Oro and the deputy host returned to the hall.

"It's on the stone platform," whispered the president of the Fisheries Guild, masquerading as Jorge, to Lumian.

Lumian refocused his attention and casually inquired, "Who was responsible for sending the Ring of the Sea Queen to the basement last year?"

"I don't know. Without any special arrangements, anyone can do it. The four deputy hosts in the hall last year died in the sea's rage when the ritual failed." Juan Oro, sensing Lumian's suspicion, clarified.

Dead? Unlikely… Lumian lacked the corresponding item for spirit channeling and didn't have time to search for it. All he could do was ask, "Which one of them was familiar with the ring-making ritual and knows the details of the Ring of the Sea Queen?"

"None of them; it was their first time serving as deputy hosts." Juan Oro shook his head. "Besides, as I said, those who know these secrets are still alive."

If the deputy host wasn't Ultraman… Then who was it? Lumian's mind raced as he arrived at a conclusion.

It was Mad Lady!

Similar to Bard, she utilized the same technique to alter her appearance. With Ultraman's assistance, she assumed the guise of a deputy host, completing the final step in creating the Ring of the Sea Queen. Then, she boarded the ceremonial ship with it.

Lumian had been puzzled by how Mad Lady could locate the special sea and rescue Bard accurately and in time. Now, he had the answer.

Mad Lady was present on the ceremonial ship, right beside Bard. There was no need for coordinated locations or timing!

Initially suspecting Mad Lady to collaborate with Bard, Lumian now realized that Bard worked with Mad Lady, providing assistance in case of unexpected developments and shouldering the responsibility of misleading investigations.

Dammit, Faceless abilities are so annoying. April Fool's is so annoying! Lumian's emotions fluctuated as he struggled to contain his emotions as he cursed. Relying on his Ascetic trait, he restrained himself from erupting.

More importantly, while he had unraveled the issues with the sea prayer ritual from last year, the identities of Ultraman and the forthcoming plans of April Fool's

remained elusive.

…

The night passed in silence.

On an out-of-fashion sailboat in the harbor, Charname, sporting a short, round-rimmed felt hat, emerged from the cabin and approached Nolfi, who stood at the edge of the deck. Charname inquired, “Can we enter those special waters if we set off now?”

Nolfi nodded, responding, “Yes, the stars will align in a specific pattern after midnight.”

Following Lumian’s instructions, she and Batna had rented a boat for a few days from other ports along the same coastline.

Charname chuckled, saying, “Then let’s set off!”

Observing the surprised and puzzled expressions of Nolfi and Batna, he explained, “If we follow the Governor of the Sea’s ceremonial ship, we’ll undoubtedly be discovered by the Fisheries Guild. Setting off an hour or two later would be meaningless. Therefore, we’ll go ahead of time and hide there, patiently waiting for an opportunity!”

Although Nolfi didn’t understand the nature of the opportunity Charname referred to, she didn’t inquire. She responded with anticipation, “Okay.”

Charname then turned to Batna.

“Are you joining us? It will be very dangerous.”

Batna’s expression fluctuated. After more than ten seconds, he declared, “I’m going!”

Charname clicked his tongue but remained silent.

At that moment, Nolfi frowned, glancing at other parts of the deck, and asked, “What about the sailors here? We can’t leave the sea without them, and they can’t handle too much danger.”

Charname chuckled.

“Don’t worry, we have sailors who can handle danger.”

As soon as he finished speaking, he half-turned, raising his right hand to the third level of the cabin. He clasped his index finger and thumb into a ring and extended his other three fingers.

Soon, the captain, first mate, second mate, and all the sailors emerged,

their eyes tightly shut. Like sleepwalkers, they lined up and walked down the gangway toward the docks.

Batna and Nolfi’s eyes froze, as if trapped in a terrifying dream.

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Chapter 572 - 572 The Real Target

572 The Real Target

572 The Real Target

In seven to eight minutes, their figures vanished from different spots.

Immediately after, Nolfi and Batna observed pitch-black shapes emerging at the edge of the cabin, and eerie pale-white or dark-green flames igniting across the deck.

Figures crawled out of the pitch-black flames.

Some wore tattered clothes, and their skin visibly rotted. Others were white bones with fragments of flesh hanging from them. Pale-white flames protruded from their eye sockets.

These were all corpses!

Soon, a half-rotted corpse in a dirty jacket hoisted the sail. The corpse with a missing breastbone stowed the heavy anchor. The other corpses took their positions, steering the sailboat slowly away from the port.

As they gazed at the decaying flesh, pale-white bones, and sinister flames of different hues, Batna and Nolfi felt as if they had stepped into a novel world.

Horror novels! Ghostly tales!

“Navigator, it’s time for you to work.” Charname’s voice snapped Nolfi back to reality.

…

In the Governor of the Sea’s residence.

Lumian leaned against the statue-less wall, surveying the other deputy hosts in the hall, including Juan Oro.

Uncertain if any of them were genuine, they could easily be impersonated by a Faceless.

In the upcoming operation, the only person he could unequivocally trust was himself.

An hour passed in an indescribable silence. This time, Lumian took the initiative, leading Juan Oro into the basement to retrieve the Ring of the Sea Queen, completing the “paying homage to the ancestors” segment.

The ring rested on the dilapidated stone platform, untouched. Lumian couldn’t be certain if it was authentic, but the patterns, symbols, and structure seemed intact, and no one had lurked in the basement after inspection.

Maintaining his calm demeanor and a tense heart, Lumian patiently waited until 6 a.m., feeling both mental and physical fatigue dissipate.

Two hours later, the current Governor of the Sea, Simon, exited the vigil room with four Maidens of the Sea and approached the building’s door.

Lumian, Juan Oro, and the other deputy hosts promptly stood up and followed.

Ascending the gangway to the deck, Lumian sensed an invisible gaze from every window, flower, and mast—a familiar feeling from when the statues in the Governor of the Sea’s residence came to life.

This was the designated spot for him, the deputy host named Brian.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

On the dock of Milo Village, vibrant paper fragments burst forth from ceremonial cannons, creating a colorful display.

Amid the festive atmosphere, the ship set sail gradually. It circled Port Santa, capturing the cheers and blessings of the people before venturing toward the distant sea.

As the navigator, Juan Oro guided the ship into a boundless azure sea with no discernible landmarks. They weaved between left and right turns, occasionally reversing direction.

Nearly an hour passed, and beneath the clear, bright sky, dense fog suddenly enveloped the ship.

Splash!

Within the fog’s depths, waves surged like mountains. Any ship it touched would capsize or shatter.

The Governor of the Sea, the Maidens of the Sea, some sailors, and the two deputy hosts, participating in the sea sacrificial segment for the first time, were terror-stricken by the ominous scene, their faces paling.

For Juan Oro, a veteran of many sea sacrifices, it seemed like he was observing a child’s plaything. He directed the sailors with no emotional fluctuations, guiding the ship along the only safe sea route through the thick fog and exaggerated

waves.

After an unknown duration, the fog lifted, and the tidal waves miraculously subsided. An ocean resembling sapphires unfolded before Lumian's eyes.

The sea appeared limitless, but the distance and sky were gray, with only a hint of sunlight seeping through.

…

Port Santa, Solow Motel.

Lugano stood by the window, observing as the citizens formed celebratory teams, weaving through streets and alleys, spreading their joy.

Having already taken Ludwig to witness the Governor of the Sea's colorful flower boat ritual and participated in two spontaneous citizen-led celebrations, Lugano returned to the suite as teatime approached. There, he provided Ludwig with food he had purchased and prepared in advance.

I could still head out later. When the Governor of the Sea returns, another wave of celebrations will ensue. Unfortunately, I can't engage with the enthusiastic Feynapotter girls with such a child in tow… Lugano thought regretfully.

At that moment, a knock echoed on the door.

"Who is it?" Lugano, a seasoned bounty hunter, heightened his guard.

"It's me." A gentle voice emanated from outside the door.

Lugano recognized her as Rubió Paco's wife, Madame Giorgia.

She's here to see the boss? Has something happened to the Paco family again? Lugano glanced at Ludwig, who was eating earnestly, and quickly walked to the door and opened it.

Giorgia, not clad in her usual glamorous attire, wore a black dress akin to that of an old widowed matriarch.

"Where's Monsieur Louis Berry?" the lady inquired.

"He's participating in various celebrations for the sea prayer ritual," Lugano fabricated an excuse.

He observed the distressed Madame Giorgia and instinctively inquired with concern, "Did something happen?"

"H-h…" Giorgia stammered, panic and fear evident in her eyes. "I discovered the true identity of that humanoid lizard!"

That humanoid lizard? The one the boss killed? Amidst Lugano's confusion, Giorgia suddenly threw herself into his arms.

The fragrance permeated Lugano's senses, momentarily hindering him from immediately pushing the madam away.

Giorgia suppressed her voice but couldn't conceal her fear.

"That humanoid lizard was my husband, Rubió Paco!"

"Huh?" Lugano was both surprised and bewildered.

Giorgia gritted her teeth and explained, "The one you guys saw, it's fake!"

Fake? Someone impersonated Rubió Paco, and the real Rubió Paco had transformed into a humanoid lizard, killed by the boss? As this realization struck Lugano, his thoughts suddenly slowed down. The surroundings seemed coated in a glass-like layer.

He instinctively struggled, but Giorgia held him tightly, interrupting him with various subtle actions.

Ludwig, engrossed in devouring a skewer of roasted octopuses at the dining table, appeared oblivious to the unfolding silent drama at the door.

In a suite diagonally across the corridor, Rubió Paco sat quietly in a recliner, wearing a faint smile.

He had orchestrated the humanoid lizard incident and hired Louis Berry to resolve it intentionally. Firstly, he aimed to confirm the other party's identity. Secondly, he wanted to leave a vulnerability in the Paco family's handling of weak monsters, ensuring others wouldn't suspect a Faceless's involvement to confuse the target.

However, he abandoned the plan to deal with Louis Berry and refrained from triggering the corresponding trap.

This decision wasn't due to uncertainty about the target's identity; the Mysteries aura on Lumian Lee's chest couldn't escape his notice. He was unlike others. Instead, he had a new plan.

The overall April Fool's operation might not align with Loki's personal objectives!

His current focus shifted to the young boy, Ludwig.

To him, a sealed demigod-level powerhouse was a gift from the Celestial Worthy!

No ritualistic target could be more suitable.

Hence, he hinted at the sea anomaly, simultaneously confusing Lumian Lee and allowing him to connect the concepts of sealing and theft, understanding what

occurred during last year's prank. He took the initiative to board the ship and head to the sea sacrifice grounds, enticing this formidable opponent away while another force restrained him.

Now, he was ready to execute a grand performance, captivating the attention of numerous Port Santa citizens!

…

The calm, gem-like sea held no waves. The four Maidens of the Sea engaged in a brief sacrificial dance, while sailors carried offerings—lambs, roosters, ox heads, and more—from the cabin, stacking them at the bow.

With the Ring of the Sea Queen in hand, Juan Oro approached the Governor of the Sea, awaiting the groom's gift for the proposed marriage.

Lumian, vigilant of everyone present, scanned his surroundings.

Any one of them could suddenly reveal themselves as Bard, Mad Lady, Ultraman, Loki, Hisoka, or a marionette.

The gentle, rhythmic dance concluded swiftly. Juan Oro produced the peculiar golden ring, passing it to the incumbent Governor of the Sea, Simon Guiaro.

At that moment, a person emerged openly from the cabin.

A woman in a black nun's uniform and matching hat, her expression calm yet tinged with sadness.

The surrounding sailors paid her no heed, as if she were invisible.

Seeing this, Lumian's pupils dilated, then constricted.

It was the source of Derangement!

The humanoid Sealed Artifact lost by the Eternal Blazing Sun Church!

In an instant, Lumian comprehended two things.

The Death Navigators, transformed Governors of the Sea, had coincidentally appeared near the Flying Bird, stirring colossal waves.

The humanoid Sealed Artifact had unconsciously set out to sea, coincidentally choosing the same destination as him—Port Santa.

There was a purpose behind this!

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Chapter 573 - 573 Bard

573 Bard

573 Bard

Lumian's gaze met hers, filled with indescribable colors, and the figure in his line of sight vanished.

Simultaneously, Lumian recognized the insignificance of this occurrence. It didn't warrant further consideration.

Beside the incumbent Governor of the Sea, Juan Oro noticed the once calm azure sea undulating. In the gray sky, stars barely visible to the naked eye underwent changes, stirring an inexplicable throbbing and emotional shift within him.

An anomaly? Juan Oro couldn't determine if it was good or bad. Given the circumstances, any change was treated as an accident, potentially caused by a hidden enemy.

Without hesitation, he forcefully thrust the Ring of the Sea Queen into the hands of the incoming Governor of the Sea, Simon, growling, "Hurry up and marry the sea!"

In a moment of desperation, the president of the Fisheries Guild unintentionally failed to alter his voice to sound like Jorge. However, his vocal cords had changed, making him sound younger than usual.

Simon, taken aback by the shout, didn't notice Juan Oro's voice shift.

He raised his hand, clutching the Ring of the Sea Queen, and recited, "I espouse thee, O sea, as a sign of true and perpetual dominion!" With that, he threw the unique golden ring. It trembled with light, its surface covered in a gentle glow.

As the Ring of the Sea Queen submerged, its glow intensified and expanded to the size of a baby before transforming into a cone of light, vanishing into the azure seawater.

In the next moment, Juan Oro, Lumian, and the rest heard a deafening boom.

Splash!

The sea boiled, unleashing huge waves that catapulted the colorful flower boat into the air. A destructive aura echoed in the surroundings.

Wh… The sea's fury! How could this happen? Juan Oro's pupils dilated in disbelief. He couldn't fathom that they had angered the sea again. It seemed like this year's sea prayer ritual had failed once more.

He had meticulously followed every step, witnessing the placement of the Ring of the Sea Queen on the dilapidated stone platform representing the ancestors. He personally retrieved and guarded it with utmost vigilance. Everything went smoothly!

How could this be?

As the bridal boat teetered on the verge of capsizing, Juan Oro clenched his fists, and crystalline scales resembling starlight manifested on his body.

His eyes darkened, resembling resplendent stars emerging within.

He melded with the "sea."

The crashing sound abruptly ceased, and the majestic, terrifying azure waves froze in midair, as if held tightly by an unseen hand.

In Milo Village, within the cathedral-like Governor of the Sea's building.

Standing before a glass window overlooking the weeds outside, he muttered to himself, It's almost time…

I wonder how Juan Oro will react when he discovers the sea sacrifice has failed again. Heh heh, this is payback for all the 'care' he's given me over the past year.

What's Loki up to? Why the sudden deviation from the original plan? Isn't he concerned about potential accidents?

Miguel—a key member of April Fool's, Bard—had previously disguised himself as the sailor, Iru, and boarded the ship, escaping with Mad Lady when he jumped into the sea.

Their plan over the course of the past year was devised last year. They had selected locals from Port Santa who resembled the unfortunate governor. After disrupting the sea sacrifice and returning ashore, they promptly killed one of their targets, allowing Bard to assume the guise.

Their confidence in Miguel—disguised by Bard—becoming the false Governor of the Sea stemmed from Ultraman taking charge of the matter.

To prevent potential rebellion from peripheral April Fool's members, Bard, a former Swindler, intentionally wrote Emperor Roselle's Secret Chronicles and handed them to Loki. The latter discreetly distributed them in Trier, creating the illusion of Bard's activity in Intis. This tactic prevented others from connecting Miguel—obediently residing in the Governor of the Sea's residence—to Bard.

Writing about Emperor Roselle's romantic past indeed amused Bard, and witnessing Juan Oro's reactions, including the lashing with a crutch before intimate encounters with his granddaughter and the wives and daughters of relevant personnel, greatly satisfied Bard's mischievous tendencies.

However, pranks were secondary. Bard's main objective in assuming the disguise of the Governor of the Sea was clear:

He gained unrestricted access to the basement of the building, believed by Milo Village's inhabitants to be the sacrificial ground for their ancestors!

Despite being a fake Governor of the Sea under the watchful eyes of sea spawn in the house, he had free rein everywhere except the ring-making ritual grounds and the vigil room. Only those two areas were off-limits unless he crossed a line. Moreover, Ultraman confirmed that the basement of the Governor's residence held no value for the sea spawn. Except for two symbolic guards at the staircase, there were no monitors or protectors inside.

Villagers of Milo Village only visited occasionally, showing respect for the Governor of the Sea by not entering or leaving the building without permission.

This provided ample opportunities for Bard, the imposter Governor of the Sea.

Thinking about the expressions of Juan Oro and Lumian Lee when they witnessed the sea prayer ritual's failure again, Bard couldn't help but chuckle. He muttered in a mocking tone, You know the sea sacrifice, ring-making, and vigil happen once a year. Haven't you considered that the ancestral sacrificial ritual can only occur annually?

That dilapidated altar requires the slow accumulation of worshippers' spirituality. It takes almost twelve months to gather the necessary enchantment.

Over half a month before the basement gained serious attention, he had strategically placed an item related to one of the three pathways on the altar, openly siphoning the accumulated theft powers!

With this plan, Bard believed that, regardless of the success of the previous night's ring-making ritual, regardless of how closely Juan Oro and Lumian Lee guarded against the replacement of the Ring of the Sea Queen, it wouldn't possess the ability to steal power from the sea bottom.

Hence, the sea prayer ritual was destined to fail. The seal would further open, and the long-accumulated "volcano" inside would erupt!

Anyone attempting to stop it would perish!

Last year, the reason April Fool's took the risk of making Mad Lady a deputy host and deliberately replacing the Ring of the Sea Queen on the sacrificial ancestor's stone platform with another item arose because the theory that the high-level stealing power could only be used once a year wasn't entirely confirmed.

Although Ultraman could analyze and experiment in the basement, he refrained from doing so too frequently to avoid suspicion.

Following the sea prayer ritual failure last year and the subsequent monthly experiments over the past eleven months, Bard, Ultraman, and Mad Lady were now certain that they didn't need to go through the trouble of replacing the real Ring of the Sea Queen. Instead, they could preemptively take away the theft power. Thus, they sneered at Lumian Lee's efforts, unconcerned about his actions or the need for destructive measures to avoid detection by the Earth Mother Church.

Despite their confidence, they still had to maintain appearances, including seeking help from Lumian Lee.

Bard shifted his gaze, averting it to his left hand.

This was, in fact, the item carrying the key functions of the Ring of the Sea Queen!

…

Port Santa, Solow Motel, at the entrance of the fifth-floor suite.

"Hugging" Madame Giorgia, Lugano's thoughts faltered, as if the iron gears were covered in yellow rust or lacking lubricant.

W-what's… going on?

Am I… under attack?

No… I have to hurry… I have to… get rid… of this state…

Lugano attempted to push away the woman in his arms, only to realize she had become surprisingly heavy. Using her joints subtly, Madame Giorgia prevented him from raising his arms and legs. The movements resembled a lovers' playful interaction.

Coupled with his disjointed thoughts, even a Planter like Lugano couldn't break free from Giorgia's restraints.

Panicking, Lugano opened his mouth, about to call for help.

Just then, Giorgia lifted her head, pressing her red lips against his.

Lugano was momentarily taken aback.

In the adjacent room, Jenna, disguised as a female mercenary, held a mirror to "reflect" the situation in Lumian's living room through the glass and other items.

Seeing Lugano and Giorgia embracing and flirting, Jenna couldn't help but curse under her breath, "Dammit, can you even go into heat at a time like this? And in

front of a child!”

Considering that Franca would be joined by members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, Lumian tasked Jenna with secretly monitoring Lugano to figure out what was wrong with the interpreter.

As a former Showy Diva, Jenna had witnessed similar scenes and even more restrictive ones. She couldn’t fathom why they chose to display such affection at the door.

At that moment, Anthony Reid, standing beside her, looked at the mirror and frowned.

“It doesn’t seem like they’re making out. Their actions and expressions aren’t typical of people engaged in such activities.”

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Chapter 574 - 574 Heavy

574 Heavy

574 Heavy

Though Jenna had witnessed such scenes in the past, she hadn't delved into the intricacies of others' intimate interactions. Upon hearing Anthony's words, she promptly sided with the Spectator's perspective.

Anthony continued, "Lugano's body language indicates clear resistance. His current condition is highly abnormal."

Resisting, yet not breaking free… There's a lack of intense movements, even though Lugano is a Sequence 8 Beyonder with a strengthened physique. This situation is undeniably peculiar… What kind of Beyonder powers could cause this? Jenna swiftly sifted through the information about potential adversaries for this mission.

Most of it had been compiled by Franca, with a small section supplemented by Judgment and Madam Magician.

As these thoughts raced through Jenna's mind, a realization quickly dawned on her: Marionettist!

A Sequence 5 Marionettist from the Seer pathway!

According to Franca's description of Marionettists, these Beyonders could lurk in the shadows, silently transforming their targets into autonomous marionettes from a distance.

And Madam Magician's additional information included this: "A Marionettist manipulates a creature's Spirit Body Threads. A skilled Marionettist can establish initial control of the target's Spirit Body Threads in five to 10 seconds, slowing down thoughts, movements, and stiffening the body."

Lugano's current state perfectly matched the characteristics of a Marionettist's initial control over the Spirit Body Threads!

Jenna lowered her voice and said to Anthony, "Loki…"

The enemy with the codename Loki was none other than a Marionettist!

Anthony immediately grasped Jenna's conjecture and nodded affirmatively.

“No need to rush. It takes a Marionettist several minutes to completely transform the target into a marionette. We have a chance to rescue Lugano.”

As per the information, forcibly taking Lugano away, pushing him beyond a certain limit, or triggering him could help him break free from the Spirit Body Threads or enhance his resistance to such manipulation.

Certainly, the most direct approach would be to locate Loki’s true form and launch a direct attack on the enemy, preventing him from concentrating on controlling Lugano’s Spirit Body Threads.

Jenna caught Anthony’s implication.

Don’t hurry to rescue Lugano. Find Loki’s true form while Loki hasn’t detected us!

The two of them had posed as a couple and checked into Solow Motel’s suite the previous night.

Once Loki was identified, dealing with a peculiar, insidious adversary with formidable abilities might be beyond their capacity. However, they could create a significant disturbance and “report” to the Fertility Order, responsible for local Beyonder matters. Lumian had already coordinated with Noelia in advance.

But in the next moment, she abandoned the idea.

Moreover, Loki was currently manipulating Spirit Body Threads.

How to locate Loki? Jenna pondered with a strong sense of urgency.

…

In the sealed waters, aboard the betrothal ship.

Lumian first witnessed the mountain-like azure waves surging, only to realize that they had frozen in the air, as if subjected to a sudden freeze. The surroundings emitted a violent aura, obliterating everything in its path.

The sea’s fury? Lumian’s heart skipped a beat.

Similarly, he couldn’t fathom what had gone awry. It seemed that the Ring of the Sea Queen had only unlocked the first half of the seal and hadn’t manifested the second half of its stealing effect.

Nevertheless, following the completion of the ring-making ritual, the ring was indeed placed on the dilapidated stone platform. Lumian and Juan Oro had retrieved it together.

Previously uncertain if the Ring of the Sea Queen had been swapped, Lumian now knew it hadn’t. This was evident as the Ring of the Sea Queen had further opened

the seal. A counterfeit ring, lacking the previous ritual, wouldn't exhibit a similar function.

Could it be that someone moved the Ring of the Sea Queen during the hour in the basement, preventing it from completing the eroding power's duration? Or perhaps the critical stone platform in the basement was destroyed in advance, hindering the completion of the ancestral ritual? Unlikely. How could the first scenario elude the attention of Juan Oro, me, and the sea spawn surveillance? The second scenario shouldn't be inconspicuous. It would undoubtedly be discovered by the sea spawn… As Lumian's thoughts raced, he suddenly felt a slight erosion from the destructive aura surrounding him.

His mind instantly connected to something.

Vaguely, Lumian "saw" the dark-blue seabed, nearly pitch-black. He "saw" a peculiar object partially embedded in rocks and gravel.

The object was unnaturally massive, surpassing the Fertility Order's cloister and the Governor of the Sea's residence combined. It bore a silver-gray hue, with sleek lines resembling a colossal spindle missing its front segment. At that moment, the side of the object gleamed with a radiant starlight. Together, they appeared to form a circular, transparent door.

Through the door, Lumian "saw" a particular scene inside.

Silver-gray metal walls were densely covered with special holes, resembling hives.

In some nests, black foam bubbled as thin, bristle-covered Batings Black Insects crawled out. Some nests contained more than ten compartments, with a wrinkled Little Devil lying inside, seemingly deceased and disintegrating into various forms…

As this peculiar and horrifying scene etched into Lumian's mind, he snapped out of his stupor. He couldn't be bothered to ponder April Fool's actions. He swiftly deliberated on how to prevent the sealed object from going berserk and breaking free entirely.

The extracted power has yet to cause any harm…

It appears to be suppressed by Juan Oro at the expense of his life…

If I can seize this window of opportunity to steal the released power and distribute it to everyone with a sea bloodline, there's a chance of completing the sea sacrifice segment and allowing the sea prayer ritual to succeed…

Stealing…

In an instant, Lumian contemplated two solutions:

Firstly, he could immediately seek help from Mr. Fool, an expert in this area, with Termiboros as a precedent. Secondly, he could utilize the Lie earring, a mystical

item that had gained the ability to steal others' powers on the stone platform meant to honor the ancestors.

As for the second method, Lumian sensed a strong feeling of inevitability and an undeniable sense of coincidence.

Lie had recently acquired the ability to steal someone else's power—and here it was proving beneficial in a critical moment!

Without the luxury of time for careful analysis, Lumian made a swift decision.

Put aside coincidences and inevitability for now. Resolving the current predicament was the most pragmatic approach!

He then retrieved the silver Lie earring from his pocket.

Typically, such items couldn't be brought onto the betrothal ship—they would surely be discovered by the sea spawn. However, this time, Juan Oro had communicated with the sea spawn in advance, stating that he and his assistant intended to pose as deputy hosts and board the ship to guard against any potential mishaps.

The sea spawn placed their trust in the president of the Fisheries Guild more than anyone else while the traitors were still at large. Their intelligence wasn't particularly high, and they were especially protective of the sea prayer ritual.

Clutching the Lie earring, Lumian extended his spirituality.

He immediately perceived the surrounding starlight and sensed their presence.

Lumian subconsciously extended his hand and twisted his wrist.

A plethora of starlight cascaded down, rushing toward the Lie earring and enveloping him.

At that moment, a person materialized in front of him. She wore a black nun's uniform, her face expressing profound sorrow.

She appeared like a colossal whale suddenly leaping out of the sea without warning.

It's her? The source of Derangement? Lumian finally recollected something he had forgotten.

There was indeed such a person on the ship!

In the next instant, he sensed the humanoid Sealed Artifact becoming unusually weighty, so heavy that the surrounding void slightly bent. It was so heavy that all the starlight surged toward her like the sea. The weight was so immense that the betrothal ship began to sink, and the nearby seawater was pushed aside.

Silently, Lumian witnessed the sea around him morphing into a translucent azure mountain peak, looming over them as they descended to the seabed. It resembled the walls of a deep well, and the well mouth, formed by these walls, grew more distant with each passing moment.

…

Four hours ago, at the edge of the foggy sea, Nolfi said to Charname, “You have to listen to me completely from now on. Otherwise, it will be very dangerous.”

“Sure.” Charname nodded. “But before that, we need to communicate openly.”

A smile gradually spread across his face.

Batna, who stood beside Nolfi, asked curiously, “What communication?”

Charname produced a metal canister and looked at Nolfi.

“This is an agent that can make people speak the truth. I want to know if you have a secret collaborator. If so, who is it? Don’t worry, it’s not poison.”

Charname unscrewed the lid and took a sip to demonstrate his sincerity.

Nolfi fell silent.

“If I don’t understand the corresponding details, it’ll be challenging for me to follow your instructions,” Charname began to instigate. “We’re already here. We could enter those waters at any moment and destroy the underwater palace before the sea prayer ritual. Are you truly willing to give up?”

Nolfi remained silent for a moment before accepting the metal canister and taking a big gulp.

Charname’s heart ached as he withdrew the bottle and patiently waited for the medicine to take effect.

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Chapter 575 - 575 “Handover”

575 “Handover”

After a while, Charname reached his limit. He stared at Nolfi and questioned, “Do you have any secret collaborators?”

Nolfi gently nodded and admitted, “Yes.”

Batna and Charname anticipated this response, but it failed to dampen Charname’s excitement.

“Who is it?”

Nolfi hesitated for a moment before revealing, “It’s, it’s Juan Oro!”

Juan Oro? The president of the Fisheries Guild? Batna was caught off guard.

Charname shared the sentiment.

Could the spy be the boss? Despite his critique, he pressed on, “Are you sure it’s Juan Oro?”

While instructing Juan Oro to investigate the core members of the Fisheries Guild, Lumian, who had uncovered the Earth Mother Church’s true motives, sought similar information from Noelia of the Fertility Order, which included Juan Oro, the president.

Official reports indicated that Juan Oro’s health had been relatively stable. He had never faced serious illness or severe injury. Moreover, he hadn’t displayed any signs of losing control of his lizard form.

In essence, there was no indication that he had been possessed by Ultraman, a transmigrator.

Naturally, a definitive judgment couldn’t be made based solely on this information. After all, when the original bodies of many Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members met unfortunate fates, there were no witnesses.

Despite growing older, Juan Oro’s personality remained relatively unchanged, sans the increasingly stubborn streak and a penchant for returning to the sea.

Crucially, if Juan Oro were Ultraman, many of April Fool’s disruptive actions during the sea prayer ritual would be unnecessary. It could be executed in a simpler and more covert manner.

Considering these factors, Charname had previously concluded that Juan Oro wasn't a key member of April Fool's.

Nolfi pursed her lips and disclosed, "It's him. I met him six months ago in Port Rayak."

Rayak, located north of the Dariège mountain range, served as a port under the jurisdiction of the Riston Province in the Intis Republic.

"Met before?" Charname blurted out. "Your eyes can deceive you. What you perceive doesn't necessarily reflect reality."

Unable to hold back his desire to confide, he continued, "Just like now. The me you see isn't equivalent to the real me. The difference is quite significant."

"Are you suggesting that the Juan Oro I encountered was an imposter?" Nolfi expressed disbelief. "But, he also demonstrated the ability to control the waves!"

Charname chuckled.

"Many Fisheries Guild committee members possess such abilities. What if one of them impersonated Juan Oro?"

"But, but it's too similar…" Nolfi fell into self-doubt.

Charname spoke casually, "Based on the intel we gathered, Juan Oro hasn't left Port Santa for nearly a decade.

"He's the president of the Fisheries Guild. He frequents the association daily."

While this information was used to persuade Nolfi, it wasn't conclusive evidence. If Juan Oro were Ultraman, he could have enlisted Mad Lady's help to travel to Port Rayak and return in less than two hours.

Under such circumstances, hardly anyone would notice his brief absence.

Nolfi fell silent, pondering, and muttered, "Then, then who could it be?"

"How would I know?" Charname expressed his criticism.

Appearing slightly awkward, he shifted the conversation.

"What kind of collaboration did the imposter Juan Oro seek with you? Do you have any means to obliterate the underwater palace and put an end to the sea prayer ritual once and for all?"

Nolfi's body quivered, as if grappling with an innate urge.

After a brief pause, she struggled in response, "H-he'll help me cover my tracks and disregard my existence. He'll permit me to board a ship and infiltrate the sea

sacrifice waters ahead of the Governor of the Sea's vessel and conceal myself.

"Then, as the Governor of the Sea unveils the Ring of the Sea Queen and utters the words of the marriage proposal, I'll deliver a line.

"My mother imparted that passage to me. It originated from her profound connection with the palace when she received the sea's blessing. Its—its purpose is to trigger a self-destruct sequence within the palace."

Nolfi's words flowed more effortlessly, signifying that she had given up on resisting.

"Self-destruction sequence? Are you certain? Do you comprehend that language from God knows where?" Charname wore an expression of skepticism.

"That's what my mother told me." Nolfi conveyed her lack of understanding of the language's meaning.

Charname pressed on, "Does your mother comprehend that language?"

"She doesn't, but she grasps its significance. Can you fathom it? It's a form of spiritual communication," Nolfi defended her mother with determination.

"Deceiving through soul-level communication isn't out of the realm of possibility. Moreover, it's always simpler to dupe the illiterate," Charname muttered his internal grievances once again.

He furrowed his brow and inquired, "Did the imposter Juan Oro inform you that the sea prayer ritual failed last year?"

"No. If he had, I wouldn't have chartered a boat at Port Santa," Nolfi expressed her frustration on the matter.

Had she known from the beginning that last year's sea prayer ritual had faltered, she would have anticipated heightened vigilance at Port Santa this year. Those attempting to rent a boat for a sea journey would undoubtedly be on a watch list.

Charname wore a perplexed expression.

"Wouldn't that mean the imposter Juan Oro was expecting you to be apprehended by Lato Guiaro…"

Half a year ago, neither April Fool's nor anyone with ulterior motives in Port Santa had foreseen Lumian's arrival to investigate the sea prayer ritual. This suggested that Nolfi's original role wasn't designed to lure Lumian. It might have been part of April Fool's initial plan until they reconsidered, opting to exploit the great adventurer's investigations.

Under such circumstances, letting Nolfi be captured by Lato Guiaro was evidently not a mere oversight in April Fool's plan, unless that was their intention all along.

Is Nolfi being thrown into the mix to confuse the Fisheries Guild and sow suspicion among other committee members against Juan Oro? A rift between them would hinder their cooperation. But this strategy doesn't seem cunning enough…

Is it an attempt to divert the Earth Mother Church's attention from this year's sea prayer ritual and redirect it towards Nolfi?

Or… or…

Franca, posing as Charname, had a guess.

Or perhaps, Lato Guiaro is a member of April Fool's!

The moment Nolfi arrived at Port Santa and tried to rent a boat, she was apprehended. Not only does Lato Guiaro hold complete sway over this "collaborator," but he also offers corresponding protection… Could it be that when the sea prayer ritual is on the brink of commencing, he will feign a lapse in vigilance, allowing Nolfi to escape successfully and secure a boat?

With this speculation in mind, the more Franca considered Lato Guiaro, the more something felt awry.

Whether it was the intel provided by the Knight of Swords or information from the authorities, a consistent message emerged:

Lato Guiaro had slept in separate rooms from his wife many years ago!

For transmigrators, after taking over the original owner's body, their greatest apprehension was being exposed by those around them through various details. Among these people, the ones most likely to unveil their disguises were their deeply connected parents and spouses who shared the same bed. In particular, the latter were privy to many interaction habits unknown to others. In such circumstances, opting to sleep in separate rooms was evidently a form of self-protection for transmigrators.

Initially, Franca had a fleeting suspicion when she came across this information, but she promptly dismissed it. Firstly, it wasn't uncommon for a middle-aged man and his wife to have separate sleeping quarters. Lato Guiaro wasn't the sole Fisheries Guild committee member to adopt this practice. Secondly, Lato Guiaro had previously been forcibly controlled by the Knight of Swords and Lumian before being subjected to truth serum. During subsequent questioning, he displayed no indications of ties to April Fool's. He didn't even betray any signs of stifling laughter when discussing marrying the sea!

However, what if Lato Guiaro, who willingly transmitted Nolfi's information, had prepped in advance to elude the adventurer's detection and had cloaked a portion of his memories through Hypnosis?

The truth serum fundamentally heightened the inclination to share with others. Anything beyond the user's knowledge or comprehension remained veiled.

The pressing question now was: where did Lato Guiaro acquire Beyonders or items with similar capabilities through April Fool's channels?

Franca, increasingly convinced that Lato Guiaro was Ultraman, recalled a crucial detail: the current Governor of the Sea, Simon, belonged to the Guiaro family!

Previously, Juan Oro had heeded her advice to conduct a blood test on everyone, excluding Lumian, who boarded the ship. The aim was to confirm familial ties and unveil any outsiders attempting to infiltrate in disguise.

What if Simon Guiaro was Lato Guiaro in disguise?

This method would only affirm his identity!

…

On the betrothal ship, now resting on the seabed as if weighed down by a colossal boulder,

Simon Guiaro, positioned at the bow, appeared bewildered, his face a mixture of panic and confusion.

Yet, a faint curl formed at the corners of his mouth.

At that moment, the Governor of the Sea handover ritual from the previous night flashed in his mind.

Clad in a pristine blue suit, Simon Guiaro entered the hall, noting his predecessor, Governor of the Sea Miguel, clad in a retro white robe, observing him. Following the predetermined procedure, he uttered the prearranged words.

"I'll leave the sea to you."

"It's my honor," Simon Guiaro responded solemnly as he advanced toward the other party.

Miguel extended his right hand, and Simon Guiaro reached out for a handshake. This gesture symbolized the departure of the former Governor of the Sea and the commencement of Simon Guiaro's role as the present Governor of the Sea.

After the handshake, they passed each other by. As they turned their gazes in opposite directions, the corners of their lips subtly curled upwards.

Under the scrutiny of the numerous statues surrounding them, one advanced while the other exited the hall.

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Chapter 576 - 576 Palace

576 Palace

The origin of this vortex was the humanoid Sealed Artifact they had “abducted” from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church!

After the exposure of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society’s internal affairs and the consecutive deaths of Loki and I Know Someone, one resurrected at the cost of a precious opportunity, while the other met a permanent end. They adjusted their initial sea sacrifice plan and activated a backup strategy to counter potential interference from the Research Society.

According to the revived Loki’s warning, Hela, the society’s vice president, had likely ascended to Sequence 4, reaching demigod status, and switched from the Death pathway to the Evernight pathway. Depending solely on Ultraman, Bard, and Mad Lady, their intricate plans would crumble before absolute strength.

Of course, they were confident if it were just Hela alone. Confidence wavered when considering President Gandalf, an enigma, and the other vice presidents, alongside the troublesome society members. Dealing with them now seemed an insurmountable challenge.

Starlight surged, revealing a sorrowful woman in black nun’s attire to everyone on the ship. Her presence felt magnetic, as if attempting to absorb everything around her.

It was akin to an unusually heavy iron ball falling from the center of a taut fishing net, dragging objects down and pulling the surrounding net with it. In these circumstances, previously still items naturally slipped away.

The most impacted was Juan Oro, with a potent sea bloodline and formidable sea power. Resisting the sea’s fury, he felt a spatial inversion, as if his front and back had switched to up and down. Like a lost person above an abyss, he involuntarily “fell” to the bottom at an accelerated speed, where the woman in black nun’s attire awaited.

The deputy hosts, apart from Lumian, felt an unseen force tugging at them. Struggling, they staggered towards the humanoid Sealed Artifact. The sea’s power within them wavered, propelling them to the surface, revealing sparkling starry scales that hinted at losing control.

The Maidens of the Sea and the sailors on the ship struggled against the terrifying suction force, swaying on the spot. Some experienced their skin smoothing, others felt scales emerging in their flesh, and a few shifted their feet intermittently.

Lumian, though relatively unscathed, exerted considerable strength to resist the relentless pull.

As an Ascetic, he vaguely sensed the river of fate for everyone present surging toward the humanoid Sealed Artifact. Future tributaries narrowed and converged, leading inevitably to one possibility—death.

In that moment, Lumian grasped why the humanoid Sealed Artifact could use words to curse someone to death.

Lato Guiaro reached out, gripping the shipboard to resist the invisible pull from the woman.

His gaze scanned the people on the ship, then returned to the sea's depths.

The ship descended, surrounded by a translucent wall of azure seawater. Sea creatures swam within, seemingly oblivious to the anomaly. In the distance, the spindle-shaped silver-gray object at the sea bottom, its tip embedded in rocks, came into view.

Lato Guiaro suppressed any sign of a smile.

He was nearing his destination.

The fools from the Fisheries Guild and the oblivious Earth Mother Church might never comprehend what lay sealed at the bottom of the sea here.

It wasn't a so-called "palace" but a spaceship!

It boasted a sci-fi dimension, housing advanced technology entwined with mystical Beyonder elements, forming the core of the entire spaceship.

The Ring of the Sea Queen, crafted by the sea spawn, served as the spacecraft's key. Only when the external seal weakened annually could it activate the spacecraft's internal power, merging the two to crack the core seal!

Lato Guiaro's gaze grew greedier as he stared at the faintly discernible silver-

gray behemoth.

His aim extended beyond temporary authority—to become the true Governor of the Sea and the spaceship's owner.

This would grant him immense power and the ability to accomplish unimaginable feats using the spaceship.

The azure sea, tinged with a hint of green, encircled the ship as if respectfully escorting them into the palace of the sea.

Seeing the sea's fury interrupted by the woman's sudden appearance, making her the most perilous element, Juan Oro wasted no time deepening his connection with the sea.

At that moment, he temporarily became the Governor of the Sea.

He resisted the terrifying suction force.

Abruptly, the humanoid Sealed Artifact "departed" from the ship, entering an empty darkness.

Resplendent stars flickered above, below, and to her left. Ahead stood Juan Oro, covered in starlight scales, deep-eyed, and with completely white hair.

Juan Oro raised his right hand, swiping his finger.

The "stars" plummeted with fiery tails, stirring up waves.

On the betrothal ship, everyone lost the momentum to rush to the same place. However, the power they used to resist the pull couldn't be withdrawn, causing them to fall in the opposite direction.

Lato Guiaro feigned a similar state, crashing into the bow of the ship.

Seeing the silver-gray behemoth approaching, his heart leaped with joy. He was about to recite a phrase he didn't comprehend but understood its purpose.

It was a coded order to completely open the spaceship's door and establish an energy passageway, allowing him to enter under protection!

April Fool's had been established for several years. Lato Guiaro's decision to target the sea prayer ritual last year was influenced by the resolution of other voices from the Governor of the Sea, Maidens of the Sea, and certain sea spawn. This allowed them to understand the significance of the three crucial passages.

"I espouse thee, O sea…" was one of the passages, its true meaning being to inject energy into the created key and enter a password. Lato Guiaro was about to recite the second paragraph, which served as an order to initiate the spaceship.

Initially, he and Bard planned to deceive the foolish Nolfi, tricking her into reciting the words to avoid danger. Once the spaceship activated and left these waters, the sea prayer ritual would naturally conclude. There wouldn't be any follow-up. Whether it involved self-destruction or not, it wasn't a concern for her; she had achieved her essential goal.

However, the situation changed drastically, especially when the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society learned about the sea prayer ritual. Ultraman and Bard modified their plans, roping in external aid and reducing Nolfi's role. Eventually, she became bait to lead troublemakers, represented by Lumian Lee and Hidden Blade.

Lato Guiaro opened his mouth and muttered the words.

As he finished speaking, he looked expectantly at the spaceship at the sea bottom.

How is this possible? Lato Guiaro's heart tightened, feeling a sudden sense of danger.

With a jolt, he saw everything disintegrate like a soap bubble, vanishing.

Lumian, transformed into Brian, had arrived near him at some point.

A dream!

He had been dreaming since Juan Oro pulled the humanoid Sealed Artifact into the Cosmic Void!

Hela! This name flashed through Lato Guiaro's mind.

He had paid attention to whether there were other ships lurking around!

As these thoughts raced through his mind, formless hands appeared around Lato Guiaro, pushing Lumian away.

Then, he saw a sailboat, clearly abandoned by time, outlined in the cavity surrounded by seawater beside the betrothal ship. Shadows clung to its canvas, and corpses stood on the observatory. The deck was littered with decaying or boneless undead creatures.

At the bow of the ship, a woman dressed as a black widow stood silently.

Hela!

…

Less than four hours ago, Franca, posing as Charname, signaled Nolfi and Batna to wait for further arrangements. Returning to the cabin, she entered the captain's cabin and addressed Hela, standing by the window.

"I've roughly guessed who Ultraman is, but I can't be sure."

"I guessed as much," Hela replied, having overheard Franca and Nolfi's conversation.

Franca gritted her teeth and said, "If it's really Lato Guiaro, there will definitely be variables on the ship. I have to quickly summon Lumian's messenger and inform him of our guess."

"Let's wait a little longer and time it well. We'll send the message when the deputy hosts leave the Governor of the Sea's residence but prior to boarding the ship," Hela advised.

Franca confirmed succinctly, “Got it.”

She observed Hela, with her light-blond hair naturally cascading over her shoulders, and her dark eyes seemingly darker as she meticulously engraved patterns and arranged items on the captain’s cabin desk. With curiosity, she promptly inquired, “What’s this for?”

“Setting up a ritual to completely conceal the entire ship, preventing anyone from discovering it. It’s impossible for me to do this on my own. I can only achieve it through a deity’s help. And She should be very willing to help.”

Without hesitation, Hela took off the pure silver ring embedded with a black diamond from her right hand and placed it in the center of the altar.

…

On the betrothal ship, Lumian scrutinized Lato Guiaro, his body quivering with excitement.

He couldn’t comprehend how the other party had thwarted the sea prayer ritual once again. After all, he had been vigilantly observing this “old friend” of his and hadn’t witnessed any ring-switching.

Nonetheless, it didn’t matter. A well-devised plan was not a fragile creation that crumbled with the slightest mistake. It had to allow for enough margin for error!

Similarly, Lato Guiaro couldn’t fathom how Hela and the ship had approached without triggering his detection.

But it didn’t matter. If they hadn’t prepared for the interference of the Curly-

Haired Baboons Research Society and Hela, they wouldn’t have taken action this time.

Lato Guiaro’s eyes suddenly darkened, and specks of starlight illuminated.

The surrounding azure seawater froze once more.

Here, he surpassed the old-timer, Juan Oro. He had long amassed the power to temporarily become the Governor of the Sea!

In the upcoming period, he would ascend to become the god of these waters!

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Chapter 577 - 577 Same Thoughts

577 Same Thoughts

The sky dimmed, and the sea approached nothingness. Illusory stars emerged among them, expanding like distant suns.

In the next moment, Lato Guiaro swiftly spoke a few words in ancient Hermes with a grave expression, “God says entering dreams is ineffective!”

With the reinforcement of the sea’s power, he neared the status of a Sequence 4 demigod. This allowed him to employ the Notary’s “God says” ability more precisely, diminishing Hela’s capacity to compel people into entering dreams.

Without this intervention, if Hela used her ability to forcefully restrain him without guiding him into an easily interruptible dream to gather information, breaking free from such a demigod’s dream would prove challenging in a short time. He would become like a feral dog under anesthesia, at Lumian Lee’s mercy.

The choice of “entering dreams is ineffective” over “sleeping is ineffective” was deliberate. The former was more specific and avoided potential ambiguity related to various abilities. Additionally, the Evernight pathway’s induced slumber originated from being forcefully drawn into a dream, not the other way around. Essentially, it was a dream, not sleep.

As Lato Guiaro pronounced the ancient Hermes phrase “entering dreams is ineffective,” his body still felt as weighty as the humanoid Sealed Artifact, though not as exaggerated.

This stirred massive waves in the surrounding seawater, attempting to fill the void.

The sailboat manipulated by the undead creatures visibly swayed, nearly capsizing, severely impeding Hela’s further movements.

Immediately after, Lato Guiaro reclined even further. A miniature, bright sun manifested in his eyes.

Simultaneously, the ethereal sky and the stars emerging from the sea emitted light of varying intensities. They interweaved, crafting a splendid and pure blazing pillar of light.

The majestic pillar of light descended, enveloping the front half of the sailboat, where Hela stood. It melted the undead creatures there as if they had evaporated, leaving no trace of darkness.

Hela became engulfed by the pillar of light.

This was the Light of Holiness, an ability of a Sequence 5 Priest of the Light of the Sun pathway. Despite not consuming a corresponding Sequence 4 potion and lacking demigod-level abilities after becoming the temporary Governor of the Sea, Lato Guiaro could elevate his acquired abilities to near Sequence 4.

Moreover, the Light of Holiness had undergone a mutation. It no longer emanated from a single sun. All the stars in the Cosmic Void contributed to its power. Coupled with the uniqueness of these waters, while not as potent as the Sequence 4 Flaring Sun of this pathway in purifying and destroying impure entities, its attack range and area of influence had significantly expanded.

Having transmigrated into a Child of the Sea and possessing substantial boons, Lato Guiaro had carefully considered the Sun pathway potion, believing it posed no risks and might integrate with his bloodline and original abilities, bringing about remarkable changes.

The outcome aligned with his expectations.

Suddenly, Lato Guiaro pivoted.

In the space behind him, Lumian's figure swiftly materialized.

He intended to exploit Lato Guiaro's engagement with Hela to "teleport" closer, followed by a Spell of Harrumph.

In Lato Guiaro's dark and profound eyes, resplendent stars reflected. Before Lumian could utter the harrumph, he plunged into the void, disappearing beneath the vast and distant cosmos.

He found an adversary like Lumian Lee repulsive. It wasn't that he couldn't be forcibly eliminated, but doing so might only exacerbate matters. He could potentially incur the indiscriminate wrath of a high-ranking individual.

His decision was to leverage the authority of the Governor of the Sea to banish his foe into a self-created Cosmic Void, leaving him disoriented and unable to find an exit for the time being.

Once he assumed control of the spaceship and became the true Governor of the Sea, he planned to return and calmly resolve the issue.

At that precise moment, Juan Oro, entangled in a battle with the humanoid Sealed Artifact in his Cosmic Void, suddenly detected an anomaly.

His strength rapidly waned, and his dominion over the sea gradually diminished!

It seemed like his temporary authority as Governor of the Sea was being usurped.

In the blink of an eye, the tidal wave capable of shattering ships vanished from the Cosmic Void, followed by the illusory cosmos itself.

Juan Oro "reappeared" on the ship once more and "saw" the azure sea around him, towering like a mountain peak. He "saw" Simon Guiaro, closely linked to the sea.

"It's you!" His roar coincided with an involuntary bend, as if an invisible force pressed him down to the floor.

The humanoid Sealed Artifact had also returned, reinstating a formidable weight.

Lato Guiaro gazed at her, his face covered in scales tinged with starlight. Then, he pointed at Hela's ship and spoke in a fluent language, "□%…&*"

He didn't comprehend the exact meaning of the sentence, but he understood that it could prompt the other party to attack a designated target.

Although he harbored no fear of Hela in these waters, he remained vigilant of Gandalf and others who might be on the ship. Therefore, he had to give his utmost effort.

The humanoid Sealed Artifact's sorrow dissipated slightly, and it nodded blankly.

Her body pivoted towards the sailboat, which bobbed in the "underwater waves."

In an instant, Lato Guiaro bent down and grasped his throat.

Waa!

He ejected a slender, sticky blob of flesh.

The flesh contorted and writhed, swiftly taking on a human form.

Lato Guiaro promptly straightened up and seized the moment to command,

"Mad Lady, open the passageway to the spaceship!"

He wasn't concerned that Mad Lady might usurp the position of the Governor of the Sea and become the owner of the spaceship because she lacked the sea bloodline.

In the Cosmic Void crafted by Lato Guiaro, Lumian showed no urgency to find an exit or ascertain his coordinates. He simply "teleported" out.

Waa!

He ejected a slender, sticky blob of flesh.

The flesh contorted and writhed, swiftly taking on a human form.

…

Solow Motel, adjacent to Lumian's suite.

Recalling that Invisibility and Shadow Concealment were futile against Marionettists, Jenna pondered ways to locate Loki's true form.

Drawing on information from the Major Arcana card holders, she knew a Marionettist had to be within five meters of a target to transform individuals into marionettes. In other words, Loki was undoubtedly within a five-meter radius of Lugano.

Dammit, it's all walls. My sight is blocked. Otherwise, spotting Loki would be easier. At this hour, most guests are away, celebrating the sea prayer ritual…

Walls… If there are no walls…

An idea struck Jenna.

She glanced at Anthony and blurted out, "Did you bring enough money?"

"What money?" In a rare instance, Anthony couldn't decipher Jenna's true thoughts.

Only then did Jenna realize her words had been too abrupt.

"Money to compensate the motel owner.

"I plan to blow up the opposite side, diagonally opposite, and the rooms below. We confirmed they're empty. If anyone's there, it's Loki or his marionette!

"I'll place the detonators here. They affect rooms within a seven-meter radius. Lugano will likely be injured, but with the lady as a shield and being a Doctor, he can handle it.

"Right, the explosion will attract the Fertility Order's combat nuns!"

Jenna's train of thought gradually flowed smoothly as she spoke.

Are you a Hunter or a Demoness? Have you been influenced by Lumian… Anthony mused inwardly. "Do it. Time is running out. Lumian will cover the compensation; he's loaded."

Jenna hurriedly searched her backpack for detonators. Simultaneously, she noticed Anthony setting up a simple altar.

Her heart stirred as she asked, "Do you wish to contact Madam Justice, Madam Judgment, or Madam Magician?"

“Either one works,” Anthony said seriously as he prepared for the ritual. “Although Madam Magician won’t appear until the end to prevent Loki and his backer from noticing, she mentioned that at least two Major Arcana cards will arrive early and provide assistance at critical moments.”

“Got it.” Jenna had been uncertain about when to reach out for help and inform their Major Arcana cardholders, so she had been contemplating handling it herself.

Given Anthony’s readiness to risk the disapproval of the Major Arcana cardholders, Jenna was naturally inclined to opt for the safest choice.

As Jenna stacked the detonators and other explosives near the adjacent door, Anthony Reid erected a spiritual barrier and summoned Madam Magician’s messenger, briefing her on Loki’s appearance.

Then, he swiftly took cover in the bathroom attached to the master bedroom, about six to seven meters away from the impending explosion.

Boom!

A fierce explosion tore through the fifth floor of Sauron Motel. Glass shattered, debris scattered, and crimson flames engulfed the surroundings.

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Chapter 578 - 578 Marionettes

578 Marionettes

578 Marionettes

Amidst the thunderous explosion, the partition separating the two suites and the one facing the corridor crumbled simultaneously, wreaking havoc on nearby furniture, the ceiling above, the floor beneath their feet, and the rooms opposite, swiftly enveloping them in a surging inferno.

Jenna hadn't utilized all the explosives; otherwise, the entire fifth and fourth floors of Solow Motel would have collapsed in unison. Nevertheless, a section of the roof gave way, and the floor was strewn in chaos. The epicenter of the blast unveiled the room below.

As the walls of the adjacent rooms succumbed to the onslaught, the bricks and wood propelled by the shockwave slammed into Giorgia, causing her back to buckle, and her head to split open, unleashing a flow of vivid red blood. Lugano snapped out of his intermittent thoughts and bodily stiffness, regaining his composure.

Subsequently, he experienced searing pain as the violent shockwave, mixed with flames and debris, hurled him through the air.

Had it not been for Giorgia shielding him and with his robust Planter's physique, he likely would have faced severe injuries, teetering on the brink of death. Limbs could have been severed, or vital points struck. Despite this, he ended up a battered mess, with a few bones broken, nearly succumbing to unconsciousness.

Ludwig had sought refuge under the dining table at some point—along with his food. With the advantage of distance and the makeshift "shield," he only bore the impact of the collapsed table.

Simultaneously, Jenna and Anthony burst out of the master bedroom washroom in their suite, their gazes fixed on the adjacent rooms where walls had crumbled, filling the air with swirling dust.

They vaguely discerned a figure.

The figure, bearing a striking resemblance to Rubió Paco, stood beside the upturned recliner.

Loki! Jenna wasted no time. She condensed a dark, illusory flame and sent it hurtling towards her target.

Behind her, Anthony Reid's eyes took on a golden tint, pupils dilating. He was poised to lock onto Loki, ready to unleash Frenzy—a technique that would plunge Loki into an emotionally and psychologically triggered state, rendering him incapable of rational thought and effective response.

Just as Anthony and Jenna prepared to strike, their vision darkened, and Loki vanished.

They found themselves in a void, no blue sky or white clouds above, no solid ground below—just darkness embellished with a myriad of stars.

Cosmic Void!

This semi-real, semi-false illusion was a creation achievable by a Child of the Sea at a certain level.

In the void, Jenna and Anthony beheld a widowed woman in a black bonnet with subtle wrinkles in front of them.

Martha!

The Paco family's matriarch, now a marionette under Loki's control, was hidden in the room where Loki manipulated the Spirit Body Threads.

With sufficient preparation time, how could Loki not perform with his marionettes? He had two puppets with Beyonder powers, and this was one of them. Another remained concealed, with the last slot reserved for specific situations, adaptable at will. It could be switched once an enemy was under control.

When Loki posed as Rubió Paco, bringing Madam Martha to meet the Governor of the Sea, the family's matriarch was already a marionette. Thus, he had to ensure she stayed within his control range.

Lugano discerned Madam Martha's severe injuries primarily because a marionette was essentially comparable to a lifeless entity. A Marionettist's manipulation of her Spirit Body Threads allowed her to execute various actions, mimicking living characteristics. To a Sequence 8 Doctor, this appeared as grave injuries.

Had Lumian not infrequently observed others' luck without forming a habit, he would have realized that Madam Martha's fate was off. It was eerily still, resembling death.

Martha, a subtle smile on her face, lifted her right hand, a spectral green light coalescing at her fingertips.

The radiance morphed into a beam that streaked towards Jenna.

Having heard Lumian explain the sea bloodline's abilities, Jenna, at the sight of the spectral green light, rolled out of the Cosmic Void. Anthony followed suit. He

refrained from using Frenzy on Martha since a marionette, essentially dead, wouldn't succumb to frenzy.

In the next moment, they both felt a weightiness, plummeting swiftly through the empty cosmos. They experienced the weightlessness Franca occasionally mentioned.

In the blink of an eye, Jenna and Anthony landed on the ground and steadied themselves, yet Martha was nowhere to be seen. The empty cosmos was shattering inch by inch.

They were still in Solow Motel, but they had descended from the fifth floor to the fourth.

This was because the mid- to low-level Cosmic Void resembled more of an illusion. There would be a barrier akin to a wall of spirituality around them. After falling into it, their bodies remained in reality. As they rolled and dodged, Martha nudged them forcefully with her formless power, causing them to plunge into the floor cavity created by the explosives.

Jenna didn't hesitate. She sprinted up the wall, seized a crack, and flipped back to the fifth floor where the explosion had occurred.

She saw Lugano tending to his injuries, and Loki and Madam Martha were absent from the room diagonally opposite.

Ludwig, who had hidden under the dining table, had vanished as well!

On Aquina Street, amid a lively folk celebration, Loki, having transformed into an inconspicuous passerby, carried Ludwig, who had "fallen asleep," through the crowd.

His other marionette, a Soul Assurer of the Evernight pathway, stayed concealed on the opposite side of Lumian's suite, ready to exert influence on the target.

Initially, Loki had dispatched his temporary marionette, Giorgia, to handle Lugano. He had manipulated the Doctor's Spirit Body Threads but refrained from deploying his more potent marionettes. It wasn't due to fear of alerting Ludwig, but rather a concern that an unseen adversary might be lurking in the shadows. After all, several lodgers in the motel hadn't left for the sea prayer ritual celebrations. A couple had returned before lunchtime next door, almost synchronizing with the target.

Moreover, a Marionettist's advancement ritual demanded a grand performance—a splendid and profound drama. Silent, unnoticed assassinations lacking a sufficient audience failed to meet the requirements.

Therefore, Loki intentionally singled out Lugano first. If there were no other foes lurking, it was akin to switching marionettes. If there were, he could draw them all to him and clandestinely manipulate the target with the other marionette nearby.

Aware that it was a sealed demigod, Loki knew its strength might be limited, but its essence remained unchanged. It was impervious to many influences. However, he believed the Evernight pathway's forced sleep would still be effective. Since this sealed demigod could experience exhaustion, hunger, and the need for rest, food, and sleep like a true child, it implied that the seal had impacted corresponding characteristics, making him akin to an ordinary person in those aspects. At most, he would awaken faster and require less rest time.

A few seconds would be ample time for Loki to relocate and conceal himself with the target before attempting to manipulate the other party's Spirit Body Threads.

His two marionettes would act independently, confusing both enemies and the Earth Mother Church clergyman rushing over. They would lead them on a chase spanning about 100 to 200 meters, completing the corresponding performance.

As the time approached, the enemies would pinpoint his hiding spot through the marionettes' trajectory, joyfully anticipating an encounter. However, what awaited them would be a demigod-level marionette, leading to a terrifying and grim outcome.

Under the watchful eyes of the surrounding citizens, the magnificent play would conclude. Loki could consume the potion and ascend to Sequence 4, becoming a Bizarro Sorcerer!

…

On the betrothal ship, within Lato Guiaro's Cosmic Void.

This was fundamentally different from lower-middle-level abilities. It was both an illusory realm and an alternate space that could cause people to lose themselves and become abnormally fragile. It was akin to the Bottle of Fiction augmented with hallucinations.

The sticky blob of flesh Lumian had expelled squirmed rapidly, stretching and expanding into a discernible figure.

Cloaked in blood-red fabric with a matching hood obscuring its face in shadows, the figure revealed itself as none other than Mr. K of the Aurora Order.

To counter April Fool's machinations, Lumian had chosen the strategy of overwhelming force. He accomplished this with overt and imposing power, complemented by meticulous arrangements.

This plan allowed for a fair margin of error. Even if Lumian made a miscalculation, as long as April Fool's didn't have Angel-level helpers or three or more Saints, he could salvage the situation by retaining at least one or two key members.

To enhance their odds, Franca extended invitations to Hela and Gandalf. The Fertility Order also notified the higher-ups, ensuring the presence of a Saint

overseeing Port Santa during the sea prayer ritual. The Tarot Club had two Major Arcana card holders positioned nearby. When April Fool's key members felt secure, Madam Magician, the Angel of Stars, would cross a long distance and descend as they prepared to depart!

For extra precaution, Lumian utilized Mr. K's finger to get him to Port Santa. Morphing with the Rose Bishop's power, he turned into a fleshy blob, and was concealed in Lumian's stomach to infiltrate the betrothal ship.

Mr. K glanced up, his eyes taking on an otherworldly illusion, as if concealing hidden doors.

Swiftly scanning the Cosmic Void, he identified an escape route.

"Follow me," he said to Lumian in a hoarse voice.

Nodding, Lumian reached into the Traveler's Bag, extracting the Flog boxing gloves and preparing to don them.

If you guys still have a backup plan or if a few powerhouses don't appear in time, I'll draw the attention of the evil gods and create chaos. We'll all face the danger together. Early exits? Forget about it!

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Chapter 579 - 579 Energy Passage

579 Energy Passage

579 Energy Passage

On the betrothal boat, the humanoid Sealed Artifact ascended, her form suspended in the air. Striding through the atmosphere, she advanced toward the sailboat.

With the weight akin to a massive stone sphere, she manipulated the surrounding space, causing the target ship to shift automatically. The two factions drew near.

Concurrently, the vacant eyes of the humanoid Sealed Artifact, adorned in a black nun's attire, suddenly sparked with madness and chaos. Minute blood vessels protruded from the whites of its eyes, swiftly converging.

Accompanying her "affliction," the Maidens of the Sea, deputy hosts, and sailors on the betrothal ship, unaware of what transpired, stood motionless. Their expressions blank, eyes vacant, they succumbed to the same state as the humanoid Sealed Artifact.

In that moment, within the lingering Light of Holiness on the sailboat, which had traversed the void and approached the origin of Derangement, a light abruptly vanished, swallowed by the profound darkness.

In the darkness, a tranquil voice resonated, as if reciting a beautiful poem.

The expression of the humanoid Sealed Artifact softened significantly. The chaos and madness in her eyes dissipated, and her steps slowed.

The other individuals on the betrothal ship also entered a state of tranquility and drowsiness. Juan Oro felt the intangible force suppressing his body instantly dissipate.

Straightening up abruptly, he glared angrily at Simon Guiaro, positioned at the bow of the ship.

The president of the Fisheries Guild had a rough idea of the other party's identity. After all, not many comprehended the entire sea prayer ritual and knew the intricacies of the Ring of the Sea Queen. Combined with the fact that he hailed from the same family as Simon Guiaro, there was only one answer: Lato Guiaro!

"You traitor!" Even the distant chanting from the darkness couldn't pacify Juan Oro's anger. Although no longer the temporary Governor of the Sea, he still possessed considerable strength and could be deemed formidable at sea.

Splash!

The seawater at the bottom of the betrothal ship surged, part of it threatening to hurl everyone back to the surface, while others formed into towering peaks and crashed down on Lato Guiaro, masquerading as Simon Guiaro.

Lato abruptly pivoted, fixing his gaze on Juan Oro.

The azure “peak” poised to strike him froze in midair, its descent arrested. The water’s attempt to push the betrothal ship out of this area also ceased its endeavors.

Reflected in Lato Guiaro’s eyes was the figure of Juan Oro. The corners of his mouth curled up slightly as he stated a fact in a composed tone, “I am now the Governor of the Sea.”

“Your abilities, especially those affecting these waters, are completely suppressed by me. They are useless!

The incantation from the darkness targeted the humanoid Sealed Artifact. Everything else was secondary. As the interim Governor of the Sea, Lato Guiaro couldn’t help but be affected. However, thanks to the feedback from the sea and the sharing of the burden, it didn’t reach a profound level. He only became more tranquil, devoid of the desire for intense combat and direct killing.

Compared to Juan Oro, he was more concerned about whether Gandalf was on the sailboat besides Hela. He was more concerned about whether Mad Lady had opened the spaceship’s passageway in time.

Juan Oro’s heart sank as he witnessed the azure wave suspended in midair and Lato Guiaro, seemingly indifferent to him.

At that moment, Lato turned to Mad Lady, who had reverted to her human form, and addressed his companion, clad in an unusually flamboyant blood-

colored dress,

“Hurry up.”

Mad Lady wasn’t particularly tall, standing at over 1.6 meters. Her dark-blond hair was disheveled, influenced by the heaviness effect. None of it fluttered wantonly, pointing towards the seabed.

Her face concealed by pure flesh, making it challenging to discern her original appearance. She wore a ring on each hand.

On her left hand, there was a rose-gold ring embedded with a gem resembling crimson blood, and on her right, a simple, pure silver ring.

Mad Lady responded to Lato Guiaro with a smile, “So there are times when you’re anxious.”

Only then did she cast her gaze at the silver-gray behemoth embedded in the seabed not far away.

This lunatic… Lato Guiaro cursed inwardly.

I Know Someone had an extremely nasty personality and subsequently succumbed to mental illness due to other reasons and was admitted to an asylum, but in contrast, Mad Lady had displayed an abnormal state of mind from the very beginning. In the past, she relied on I Know Someone’s regular treatment to barely maintain her rationality, but now, she was becoming more and more insane.

Lato Guiaro took a deep breath, focusing on the peculiar sounds emanating from within the spaceship, resisting the distant chants echoing in the darkness.

Swiftly regaining his will to fight, he redirected his gaze to the sailboat, raising his right arm.

Upon witnessing this, Juan Oro’s sense of despair deepened.

The white-haired old man clenched his fist, slamming it against his chest.

With a snap, his sternum broke, and his flesh tore open, releasing a torrent of blood that painted his body and the betrothal ship’s deck red.

As life ebbed away, Juan Oro’s white hair defied the heaviness effect, floating upwards.

His steps grew burdensome, each movement pressing down like a mountain on the ground.

Just as Lato Guiaro was poised to unleash the surrounding seawater, submerging the sailboat, he suddenly realized that the sea wasn’t as obedient as before.

His Governor of the Sea position teetered on the brink of collapse.

Lato Guiaro turned his head once more, narrowing his eyes at Juan Oro, now covered in blood.

“Traitor, the sea will punish you!” Juan Oro’s dark-green eyes focused, emitting a beam of blue light.

Accompanying this attack, he also intensified Lato Guiaro’s heaviness, rendering him unable to move normally.

Two beams struck Lato Guiaro simultaneously, penetrating him and sinking into the sea.

Lato Guiaro's aura weakened slightly, but he wasn't as severely injured as Juan Oro believed.

Sunlight burst forth from the April Fool key member who used "Ultraman" as his code name, eradicating the residual corrosive powers and altering his body structure.

He lifted his chin slightly and uttered three words with strange pronunciations.

"%%&("

This was also the language employed to activate the spaceship. The implication was likely akin to granting access, equivalent to obtaining a certain amount of Governor of the Sea power without "melding" with the sea after opening a crack in the seal. Lato Guiaro's usage now was to help him seize all authority back from Juan Oro.

Hmph, foolish fellow, a group of fools. They hadn't studied the sounds heard during every sea sacrifice after so many years. They guarded the treasure but failed to excavate it!

Sacrificing your life? Sacrificing yourself?

It's meaningless!

Brains and strength are the foundation!

Juan Oro, still bleeding from his chest, was surprised to discover that the authority of the Governor of the Sea had shifted again. He stared at Lato Guiaro in confusion and horror, as if looking at a true devil.

Why? Why does the sea favor him more?

Why does the sea favor this traitor more?

At that moment, Mad Lady, on the other side of the bow, completed reciting the incoherent order.

The silver-gray behemoth at the bottom of the sea trembled slightly, increasing in magnitude, causing the entire seabed and all the seawater to quake.

Inside, beams of pure light converged and shot out from the open entrance, landing at the edge of the betrothal ship, forming a transparent tunnel-like energy passageway.

Mad Lady didn't immediately leap into the pure light.

She understood that as the spaceship opened and activated further, the power accumulated in the depths of the seal would erupt. Everyone present, except the Governor of the Sea, would be torn apart.

But it didn't matter. She had a solution. The plain silver ring on her right hand, a gift from Bard, held the boon from honoring the ancestors. It could steal that power and distribute it, sharing the burden with all the Children of the Sea in Port Santa.

Of course, those present would receive more. Whether they could endure it or not depended on fate.

When the moment arrived, the Fisheries Guild members would believe the sea prayer ritual had succeeded, celebrating with joy. Little did they know that their "sea" had been stolen. The irony delighted Mad Lady.

Just as she was about to use the ring, a strong sense of Danger Premonition hit her.

In a flash, her figure vanished, reappearing a few steps away.

A shadow rose from the deck where she had stood, but it failed to envelop her.

Mad Lady then spotted Mr. K, draped in a blood-colored cloak and hood, and Lumian Lee, wearing the Lie earring but yet to revert to his original appearance.

…

Port Santa, Governor of the Sea's residence.

Bard stood by the window, gazing at the weeds outside. Silently calculating the time, he waited for the sea prayer ritual to progress.

If the sea's boon arrived with a delay and cheers erupted from Milo Village, he would openly leave this place, abandoning those who had been deceived.

When the moment arrived, anyone attempting to stop him would be torn apart by the power of the sea.

In the absence of a delayed collective boon, but with the sky and sea undergoing ominous changes, as if a catastrophe had struck, Bard could wait for the spaceship or Mad Lady to pick him up.

Of course, he wouldn't wait indefinitely. If there were no further developments from the sea prayer ritual within ten minutes, he would use his abilities to forcefully exit, shift positions, and conceal himself.

The early-stage abilities of the Marauder pathway weren't formidable. Bard had developed the habit of remaining vigilant as he advanced step by step.

As the weeds swayed in the bright sunlight and mild wind, Bard suddenly heard faint footsteps.

The sound emanated from the corridor outside, so subtle that it seemed almost like an illusion.

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Chapter 580 - 580 Theft

580 Theft

580 Theft

Bard pivoted on his heels, fixing his eyes on the door.

A moment lingered in silence, but no one rapped against the wooden barrier. The once-present soft footsteps in the corridor had now faded into nothingness.

As a seasoned Beyonder, Bard dismissed the notion of hallucination. Returning to the servant's bed, he grabbed the backpack containing the spoils of the year, feigning an escape from the Governor of the Sea's residence before confirming the outcome of the sea prayer ritual.

Such precautions were only sensible. Not everyone placed full trust in Juan Oro's promises.

Bard slung the backpack over his shoulder and slyly opened the window, aiming to slip into the weeds below.

Suddenly, a figure, standing over a meter tall, emerged from the shadows in the corner. Its disproportionately large head and wrinkled face identified it as one of the Little Devils from the sea spawn.

The Little Devil gestured for Bard to close the glass window.

Just a bunch of creatures with low IQs, Bard thought, mocking them inwardly. Despite generations, they have yet to master Highlander and can only barely communicate like dogs…

Maintaining a timid expression, Bard closed the window.

Having tested the waters, he had a rough idea of where the sea spawn responsible for monitoring him were hiding.

None of them appeared to have any connection to the soft footsteps echoing in the corridor, nor did they seem aware of them.

…

On the betrothal boat, Mad Lady, draped in a blood-colored dress with a portion of her face showing pure flesh and blood, instantly vanished upon spotting Mr. K and Lumian. She swiftly changed her position.

Simultaneously, a figure materialized behind and to her side—Lumian and Mr. K.

Employing their teleportation abilities, they blocked Mad Lady.

After Mad Lady shifted to the opposite side of the deck, the corners of her mouth, made of pure flesh and blood, curled up. Her grayish-green eyes gleamed with anticipation and excitement.

Come and attack me. Chase me. This way, no one will use the item that honored the ancestors to steal the deep power about to erupt. Let's see who reacts the fastest and 'teleports' out of these waters when the time comes!

For those unable to escape in time, they would undoubtedly be torn to pieces by the violent power, much like the fate that befell others on the ship!

As these thoughts raced through her mind, Mad Lady swiftly turned transparent, evading Lumian's crimson near-white fireballs and Mr. K's light-green wind blades.

Amidst the rumbling explosion, Ultraman Lato Guiaro was equally infuriated by Mad Lady's actions. If he were still the temporary and complete Governor of the Sea, he wouldn't fear the impact of the potent power in the spaceship. He hadn't intended to release Mad Lady and use Bard's silver ring.

However, the situation had changed. Juan Oro, burning his life and sacrificing flesh and blood, had contested him for the authority of the Governor of the Sea.

In this state, Ultraman couldn't be certain if he was fully protected or if he would suffer some level of damage. Furthermore, not being a true demigod, he wasn't sure if he could withstand such a blow, one that left him only injured.

He couldn't help but urge Mad Lady with his eyes, but his companion was 'teleporting' and didn't have time to meet his gaze. The humanoid Sealed Artifact remained immersed in distant chanting in the darkness, oblivious to the impending sea's fury.

In the blink of an eye, corporeal starlight surged from the silver-gray behemoth at the bottom of the sea. It followed the condensed energy passageway and struck the betrothal ship with a tsunami-like sound, aiming to devour everything around it.

"Here it comes!" Mad Lady eagerly prepared for her extreme escape.

Confronted with the immense wave of starlight, Lumian's initial reaction was, Why is there another sea's fury?

Relying on his combat instincts, he immediately extended his spirituality to the Lie earring on his left ear, activating the high-level stealing power attached to the mystical item.

The starlight in his eyes took on a more tangible form, as if it had materialized.

Lumian's raised left hand subtly twisted his wrist.

The starlight surging from the silver-gray behemoth changed its course, rushing towards Lumian in waves, engulfing the sky and the sea.

This was even more terrifying than the previous sea's rage. At that moment, Lumian felt as if an apocalypse had descended.

He knew very well that he couldn't absorb all the stolen power himself. Doing so would render him unable to endure, crushed into rotten meat on the spot, indirectly aiding Termiboros in escaping His predicament. Fortunately, the stolen power linked to "honoring the ancestors" had the ability to disperse the boon obtained and share it with everyone present and all those with the sea bloodlines in Port Santa, similar to every successful sea prayer ritual.

Though a bit greedy and reluctant, Lumian restrained himself. Without hesitation, he opened his left hand, seemingly grasping something, and twisted his wrist in the opposite direction.

Suddenly, the starlight that had darkened the sky and sea seemed to explode from within, scattering radiant starlight in every direction.

"The stars are raining…" Franca, concealed in the cabin on the sailboat, lamented.

She tightly clutched the Major Arcana card belonging to Judgment in her hand.

This wasn't a plea for Madam Judgment to descend directly. After all, this wasn't within her jurisdiction. It was to signal the location for the Major Arcana card holders who had already gathered nearby.

The beams of starlight left dazzling trails as they penetrated the bodies of those nearby and soared towards the bloodline connections farther away.

Lumian couldn't control this process, so he could only sense a portion of the starlight landing on him, causing his left chest to burn and corrode his flesh. Simultaneously, he witnessed a significant amount of starlight being drawn towards the potent sea bloodline and the authority of the Governor of the Sea, surging towards Ultraman and Juan Oro.

Undoubtedly, the humanoid Sealed Artifact received the most boons.

Like the eye of a vortex, she incessantly absorbed the surrounding starlight. Even the starlight heading towards Hela's sailboat diminished noticeably.

Ultraman experienced a replenishment, breaking free from his weakened state after Juan Oro's two beams, swiftly reclaiming the authority of the Governor of the Sea.

In his moment of elation, Ultraman Lato Guiaro felt intense surprise and confusion.

Why can Lumian Lee also steal the spacecraft's power?

That requires a high-level stealing ability…

Hasn't Bard's ring already been placed on the altar to honor the ancestors? And we've confirmed its corresponding effects.

Isn't the enchantment only possible once a year?

Amidst the echoing shock, Lato Guiaro couldn't be bothered to ponder the answer. His instinctive reaction was to swiftly crush Juan Oro. Otherwise, who knew what he, now strengthened, would do!

At that moment, Juan Oro felt a surge of regained strength. He observed his cracked chest and hazy flesh, now covered in starlight scales, with blood flowing out dyed in a resplendent "color."

Gazing at Lato Guiaro, he suddenly smiled—a smile of relief, yearning, and evident anger.

His body underwent a rapid transformation, eyes turning vertical, scales growing, and limbs thickening. In the span of a breath, he morphed into a humanoid lizard.

During this process, Lato Guiaro condensed a dark-green light that descended on Juan Oro in a series of rays.

Juan Oro made no attempt to dodge; he endured it.

His aura rapidly weakened, precisely as he desired.

His lizard-like form faded, growing increasingly translucent, as if condensed from starlight.

Then, Juan Oro merged into the void representing the sea and spoke to Lato Guiaro with a complex expression, "I've returned to the sea. Come quickly too…"

At the last few words, Juan Oro gnashed his teeth, not concealing his deep-

seated hatred.

Every Child of the Sea was prepared to return to the sea, and Juan Oro was no exception. However, he hadn't anticipated doing so in this manner.

His sole desire now was for Lato Guiaro to join him!

Juan Oro's figure dissipated, becoming entirely a part of the "sea."

Ultraman Lato Guiaro immediately sensed a growing animosity between his title as Governor of the Sea and the waters. The harmony that once existed had given way to a resistance emanating from the Power of the Sea.

This indicated that the Governor of the Sea authority he had acquired wouldn't be complete for some time.

Damned old fellow! Lato Guiaro cursed inwardly, but he remained composed.

He had realized that Hela was the sole demigod on the sailboat. The humanoid Sealed Artifact, having received a boon from the sea and escaped the influence of the chanting, was sufficient to hold off the opposition for a while.

Though uncertain why Gandalf and the others hadn't arrived, Ultraman Lato Guiaro welcomed this turn of events.

It allowed him to focus on dealing with Lumian Lee and his ally!

Despite being an incomplete Governor of the Sea, he possessed enough strength to control adversaries below the demigod level briefly and gain entry to the spaceship first. Moreover, Mad Lady's assistance added to his advantage.

Having received the sea's boon, Lumian contemplated his newfound capabilities.

Now, I seem qualified to contend for the authority of the Governor of the Sea…

Although I can't be considered to possess the sea bloodline and only wield some power of the sea lasting a week, far inferior to Ultraman, my fake level is high enough. I'm at the Angel level!

Just as Ultraman Lato Guiaro and Lumian responded swiftly, the gray sky suddenly brightened.

Thick bluish-green vines descended, shrouding the two ships and the surrounding area in torrential rain. Soon, they intertwined into a giant-like forest growing above the sea.

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Chapter 581 - 581 Gap

581 Gap

Upon witnessing the descent of the thick bluish-green vines, Lumian marveled as if a real carriage could traverse their expanse. It felt like a journey back to a scene from a few years ago when he would listen to his sister's nighttime fairy tales.

The dazzling, dreamlike scene and boundless imagination seemed to materialize in reality at that very moment.

Ultraman Lato Guiaro sensed imminent danger.

The individual capable of such an effect couldn't be a Low- or Mid-Sequence Beyonder; they had to be a Saint who had unlocked the door to godhood. Perhaps even beyond Sequence 4!

Another formidable demigod had entered the scene!

Who could it be? Where had they emerged from?

This certainly wasn't Gandalf. While others might be unaware, Loki had thoroughly investigated the president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, discovering he was a Beyonder of the Warrior pathway—a Warrior who had a penchant for research and mysticism.

In the blink of an eye, Lato Guiaro spotted a black shadow racing down the thick green vines. It was an enormous pumpkin drawn by numerous gray mice.

A hole atop the orange pumpkin resembled a coach. Within, a vaguely discernible woman sat, adorned in a purple robe, with crystalline heels adorning her feet.

A pumpkin coach, mice-drawn carriage, crystal heels—WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT!? Who could it be? Lato Guiaro's pupils dilated, and he couldn't help but inwardly curse with the same words he used most frequently before transmigration.

Isn't that Cinderella?

Did Roselle actually pen this fairy tale? Why hadn't it gained traction, remaining unknown to most?

For a fleeting moment, Lato Guiaro grappled with uncertainty, unable to discern whether the newcomer was a demigod aligned with another faction or a concealed powerhouse within the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

Regaining his composure, he cursed his ill fortune and prepared himself for a confrontation with the enigmatic demigod.

Luckily, being the Governor of the Sea, he could at least temporarily impede the other party in these aquatic surroundings.

Prior to the impending clash, Ultraman Lato Guiaro turned his gaze towards Mad Lady.

He didn't have time to speak, but his eyes expressed the unspoken message: "Hurry up! No time for games!"

Mad Lady swiftly grasped Ultraman's urgency and, with a blink, positioned herself at the entrance of the energy passageway. However, instead of materializing precisely there, she outlined her presence.

This decision was prompted by the sudden appearance of Mr. K and Lumian, seemingly having "teleported" nearby, with their sights set on the energy passageway's entrance.

Splash!

Whether from the imposing weight of the humanoid Sealed Artifact or Lato Guiaro raising his right arm, conjuring a mountainous azure wave, the water around the cave visibly swayed, teetering on the brink of collapse.

In that critical moment, "Cinderella," seated in the pumpkin carriage, pushed open the door and rose to her feet.

She extended her arms, and a massive iron-black cross materialized behind her.

The weight of the cross proved challenging for "Cinderella" to bear, as though it carried the concentrated sins of the entire world.

A cross? Ultraman Lato Guiaro was caught off guard as an empty room materialized before him.

Within the room, candlelight flickered, revealing a long table adorned with flesh and blood.

On either side of the table, three obscure figures hunched over, gnawing and feasting on a gruesome banquet.

Abruptly, the three figures turned their heads, fixing their gaze upon Lato Guiaro.

He stood frozen, as if their gazes had penetrated his deepest secrets, dismantling them into the essential components of spirit and flesh.

A chilling sensation surged from the depths of Lato Guiaro's heart, immediately alerting him to an intense and terrifying malice.

However, the source of this malevolence wasn't the newly arrived demigod but the silver-gray behemoth trapped at the sea's bottom—the very spaceship Lato Guiaro sought to obtain harbored ill intentions towards him!

In the blink of an eye, the silver-gray behemoth retracted its authority.

Lato Guiaro's status as the Governor of the Sea plummeted. Despite gaining a new boon, he couldn't ascend to the demigod level.

The spaceship had betrayed him.

This treachery was a result of the spell Cinderella had just unleashed—the Feast of Betrayal. Its purpose was to temporarily awaken or bestow intelligence on a target item, compelling it to commit an act of "betrayal."

Lato Guiaro had seamlessly melded with the surrounding waters, harnessing the authority of the Governor of the Sea on a temporary basis. The spaceship now stood as an entity he had yet to fully master.

Objects beyond his full control were prime candidates for betrayal!

"Cinderella" astutely sensed this vulnerability, initiating the Feast of Betrayal from the outset.

Simultaneously, the sealed environment provided the perfect conditions for her to unleash this magic—an act she might not dare attempt elsewhere.

In that moment, surprise and fear flooded Lato Guiaro. It felt as though a frigid cascade had drenched him, sending shivers through his entire being.

Since merging with the sea and gaining the Governor of the Sea's authority, Lato Guiaro had believed that ordinary Sequence 4 or even Sequence 3 demigods—commonly referred to as Saints—couldn't swiftly overpower him in this realm.

This belief created a sense of parity, but it hinged on him remaining within the waters to fully unleash his strength.

Yet, "Cinderella's" mere magic stripped him of the Governor of the Sea's authority, relegating him to Sequence 5. Without godhood, mastery over the sea slipped from his grasp.

Despite being a dual Sequence 5 of a potion and boon system with numerous unique abilities, Lato Guiaro harbored doubts about facing a genuine demigod.

A demigod temporarily shaped from an item proves fragile in the face of a true demigod. So brittle that, once targeted, they wouldn't endure even a breath… Lato Guiaro grappled with the stark realization of the fragility of a true demigod and sank into deep regret and despair.

At that moment, the silver-gray behemoth trembled violently, causing the energy passageway at the entrance to flicker and cast its luminance upon Lato Guiaro.

With a whoosh, Lato Guiaro found himself hurtling uncontrollably into the spaceship through the pure energy conduit.

This was a facet of the spaceship's calculated "betrayal," aiming to turn the recent "authority holder" into a mere nutritive substrate within a petri dish!

Lato Guiaro was initially startled, but soon a wave of joy washed over him.

An opportunity had presented itself!

It allowed him to infiltrate the spaceship, wrest control, and set it in motion

—a chance to escape!

His misfortune and despair had suddenly transformed into this golden opportunity!

Observing the unfolding scene, Lumian wasted no time. He employed Spirit World Traversal once more, reaching the entrance of the energy passageway. Stepping in, he soared into the silver-gray behemoth.

Mad Lady trailed closely behind, and Mr. K didn't intervene; instead, he followed suit.

…

Milo Village, Governor of the Sea's residence.

Bard, strategizing an escape plan, was abruptly interrupted by cheers.

Cheers… Bard's heart stirred, prompting him to dash out of the servant's room towards the nearest glass window overlooking the dock. There, he observed the gathered villagers.

Not a single sea spawn hindered the former Governor of the Sea during this process.

Many villagers raised their hands, seemingly welcoming the waves. As they praised the sea, an almost invisible glow descended, dispersing like water to different individuals.

The nearby children joyfully shouted, "The sea prayer ritual has succeeded! The sea prayer ritual has succeeded!"

That's right, it has "succeeded"… Bard smiled.

From the looks of it, Ultraman and Mad Lady have succeeded.

The April Fool's key member adjusted the collar of his crisp white shirt and hoisted a brown backpack onto his shoulders. With an unabashed smile, he strolled into the grand hall of the Governor of the Sea's residence, smoothly making his way out.

This time, he encountered no resistance. The guards stationed at the entrance knelt on the ground, expressing gratitude to the sea for its boon.

Bard took a detour to the docks, reveling in the genuine joy and praise for the sea. Every time he heard the townsfolk praising the sea and witnessed genuine smiles, his spirits lifted.

These fools!

They are treating a catastrophe as a cause for celebration!

This is a prank, a prank on everyone in Port Santa… Bard closed his eyes in satisfaction and weaved through the crowd, heading deeper into Milo Village. His ultimate destination: the peaks of the Pyraez mountain range.

As a former Swindler, Bard orchestrated the sea prayer ritual operation, serving as its main planner. The plan's success naturally brought him satisfaction.

Crucially, despite taking the most pivotal step in the entire operation, he assumed the least risk and exposure, avoiding direct confrontations.

Navigating through the mix of ancient and modern structures in Milo Village, Bard's brow furrowed slightly.

A sense of unease settled upon him.

Per the initial plan, Ultraman—unhindered by strong opposition—was supposed to use the second command to open the energy passageway. Relying on his temporary authority as the Governor of the Sea, he aimed to secure safety for himself and Mad Lady within him. Seizing the opportunity, he planned to eliminate all present and inflict severe injuries on potential demigod adversaries.

If powerhouses like Hela emerged and proved resistant to the humanoid Sealed Artifact, Ultraman—the interim Governor of the Sea—would leap into action, confronting the formidable foes head-on. Mad Lady, wielding her enchanted ring, would harness the potent energy emanating from the spaceship, transforming it into a boon for everyone present, extending its reach to all the Children of the Sea in Port Santa's vicinity. This strategic move not only allowed them to sidestep danger but also granted them access to the spaceship, enabling them to activate it.

Despite the fact that the people had already received the sea's boon and a few minutes had elapsed, the spaceship remained dormant, and the sky showed no signs of change.

What had transpired during this interval?

With this lingering question, Bard hastened his steps.

Tap, tap, tap.

Behind him, the faint sound of light footsteps echoed once again.

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Chapter 582 - 582 Efficient Person-Locator

582 Efficient Person-Locator

582 Efficient Person-Locator

Port Santa, in the city.

Loki and the unconscious Ludwig had already sought refuge in an apartment that Loki had rented many days earlier. He began manipulating the sealed demigod's Spirit Body Threads.

As for his two marionettes, they lurked within a radius of 100 to 200 meters, with Loki as the center, blending in with the various celebrating and passing crowds. They waited to be discovered by Lumian Lee's teammates and the clergyman of the Church of Earth Mother.

This was unavoidable. A Marionettist couldn't allow a marionette to wield their Faceless powers. As for the mystical item of the Seer pathway, it was in the possession of either Bard or Mad Lady.

In the partially destroyed suite of Solow Motel, Jenna and Anthony encountered Noelia, the combat nun, and her teammates, who had hurried over.

Before this, Lumian had covertly introduced the disguised Jenna and Anthony to Noelia. Hence, the nuns didn't unnecessarily question or apprehend them; they only carefully confirmed each other's identities.

"Rubió Paco is a fake. He's disguised by a Marionettist. He has captured Louis Berry's godson. He possesses two marionettes. One is Madame Martha, the Paco family's matriarch. The other's identity and abilities are unknown," Jenna recounted the recent events.

She assumed that the Fertility Order was familiar with the term Marionettist and didn't delve into unnecessary explanations. Their primary duty was to guard against the Intis Republic to the north, and many official Beyonders of Bureau 8 in the Intis Republic belonged to the Seer pathway. The two sides must have had considerable interactions.

Marionettist… Indeed, upon hearing the Sequence name, Noelia frowned slightly. Is Intis sending spies to disrupt the sea prayer ritual?

“That’s a traitor from Intis’s Bureau 8,” Jenna explained, her allegiance to Intis stronger than Lumian’s.

Noelia understood that time was of the essence and she couldn’t discuss unrelated matters. She asked the key question, “Why seize Louis Berry’s godson? Is he held as a hostage, or does he possess some extraordinary significance?”

Jenna thought for a moment and revealed the limited information she had just learned.

“It’s a sealed demigod, a creature.

“Loki will need substantial time to transform him into a marionette, not just a matter of minutes.”

A demigod? A sealed demigod? That child with the insatiable appetite is a sealed demigod? Noelia’s mouth hung open in surprise and astonishment. She almost questioned the reliability of her own ears.

The supposed godson of the adventurer Louis Berry is, in fact, a sealed demigod creature?

What’s his backstory? Why is he wandering around with a sealed demigod creature?

Moreover, there’s talk of a humanoid Sealed Artifact, rumored to be at Grade 1, that recently surfaced in Port Santa. It’s on par with a sealed demigod creature. Despite extensive searching, no one has been able to locate it.

If not for the disparities in appearance, gender, and age, Noelia might have suspected Ludwig to be the humanoid Sealed Artifact that the Eternal Blazing Sun Church had “misplaced.”

Now, an absurd idea echoed in her mind.

Is it the current trend to stroll around with sealed demigod creatures?

Regaining her composure, Noelia promptly addressed her team members, “Cemilie, quickly return to the Order and inform the dean. Ask her to deploy all available personnel to the city. Locate them as soon as possible. Yes, Madam Martha or Louis Berry’s godson, Ludwig.

“After finding them, unless the situation is exceptionally urgent, refrain from acting recklessly. Report first and await assistance.”

Considering that the Marionettist had likely altered his appearance and height, and the identity and appearance of his other marionette were unknown, Noelia concentrated her search on Madam Martha, who had become a marionette, and Ludwig, who had been abducted.

“Yes, Captain!” In a bid to save time, the brown-haired Cemilie darted through the shattered glass window. Utilizing the stone bricks and wood protruding from the outer wall, she leaped from the fifth floor to the street.

The dean Noelia referred to was the head of the local cloister, the clergyman overseeing the Fertility Order in Port Santa—the Fertility Order’s headquarters in Torres, the capital of Gaia Province.

Just as Cemilie took a few steps and was about to explore the nearby streets, Jenna, Anthony, Noelia, and the others witnessed a massive bird soaring through the air.

The bird’s body was grayish-black, its feathers were tough and lacked softness. Its eyes appeared to be adorned with two rubies.

The grayish-black bird flapped its wings and glided to the collapsed fifth-

floor outer wall of Solow Motel.

Only then did Jenna and Anthony realize that the grayish-black bird was sculpted from stone. It was weighty, substantial, and unyielding, yet it emanated a vibrant vitality.

Perched on the back of the lifelike grayish-black bird was a woman in a brown clergyman’s robe. She wore a nun’s wimple with wheat patterns and seemed to be in her thirties, but she exuded a maternal aura, as if she had nurtured many children.

The brown-haired, brown-eyed, mature, and stunning clergyman turned her gaze to Noelia and succinctly stated, “Details.”

Noelia swiftly echoed Jenna’s words. She positioned herself with a slight spread of her legs and raised her hands.

“Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!”

The clergyman was none other than the archbishop of the Church of Earth Mother’s Gaia diocese, Agrippina.

Agrippina nodded gently and uttered, “I know Martha from the Paco family. I didn’t expect her to meet such a fate. Sigh, may the Earth Mother embrace her soul, and may the flower symbolizing her bloom again next spring.”

The archbishop delicately shifted her right foot, conveying a signal to the massive bird sculpted from grayish-black stone.

The stone bird, pulsating with vitality, flapped its wings and ascended dozens of meters into the air.

Agrippina extended her right hand and scattered a handful of dark-black seeds the size of rice grains.

With a flutter, the port's white-headed seabirds flocked in, covering the sky. Each one gripped a seed in its beak and circled around.

They formed a circle within a 300-meter radius.

Observing this spectacle, the jubilant citizens of Port Santa, assuming that the seabirds had joined in the celebration of the successful sea prayer ritual, erupted in cheers of delight.

After two to three minutes, a solitary combat nun spotted Madam Martha. The marionette was concealed on the other side of Aquina Street.

Upon receiving the information, Agrippina turned her head and fixed her gaze into the air.

Soon, the white-headed seabirds released the rice-sized seeds from their beaks.

Agrippina withdrew her gaze and folded her arms across her chest.

Each seed that touched the ground instantly sprouted and grew rapidly, morphing into thick dark-green vines.

Simultaneously, Jenna, Anthony, Noelia, and the others, who were scouring the street for Ludwig and Loki, witnessed the sky darken, as if night had prematurely descended or a colossal creature had eclipsed the sunlight.

Vaguely, they sensed the presence of a massive pitch-black wing covered in a membrane, casting an illusory aura.

In the next moment, a crimson full moon ascended from the night, hanging high in the sky. It seemed as though a tall, slender figure was slowly advancing.

Crimson moonlight bathed the area surrounded by the dark-green vines, captivating all the citizens like statues.

Nourished by the moonlight, the dark-green vines swiftly expanded, swiftly encasing the streets around Aquina Street in a "forest."

Dark-red flowers blossomed in the "forest," densely clustered and ubiquitous.

The flowers emitted a faint, sweet fragrance that intermingled, gradually intensifying the scent.

Upon inhaling this fragrance, the residents of Port Santa, as well as the rats and bedbugs in the corresponding area, entered a stupor, swaying and collapsing to the ground.

Dammit! Jenna understood that Archbishop Agrippina of the Church of Earth Mother was employing indiscriminate tactics to influence the area, aiming to locate and control Loki, but she still cursed internally.

This gaseous anesthetic jogged unpleasant memories.

In the past, she had nearly fallen victim to a similar gas used by that Bliss Society pervert.

Yet now, in the diffusing gas with a noticeable difference in smell but a similar effect, her head started to spin, and her body felt uneasy.

The same was true for Anthony and Noelia. One bore dragon-like scales on his skin, while the other held her breath.

At that moment, three white-headed seabirds descended from the sky, each clutching a metallic bottle, circling Jenna and the others.

Noelia glanced at Archbishop Agrippina, who was hovering in midair, and received a nod. Without hesitation, she took the bottle from a white-headed seabird's claw and gulped it down.

She swiftly regained consciousness, no longer affected by the gaseous anesthetic.

Observing this, Jenna and Anthony accepted the metal bottles and consumed the sour agent.

They no longer felt dizzy and weak.

The three white-headed seabirds weakly ascended again, landing by the roadside one after another, and dozed off.

In the area surrounded by the dark-green vine "forest," only a marionette remained standing at that moment, impervious to the gaseous anesthetic. Its presence was immediately exposed.

In the apartment he had pre-rented, Loki was taken aback to discover that controlling the sealed demigod's Spirit Body Threads was much more challenging than he had anticipated.

This wasn't a problem that could be resolved in ten minutes. According to his initial estimate, it would take at least an hour!

Given the time, the Church of Earth Mother could turn these streets upside down!

As the gaseous anesthetic created by the dark-green vines and dark-red flowers permeated the room, Loki's initial impulse was to craft an air straw nearly 30 meters long and extend it high into the air to breathe fresh air. However, he quickly dismissed the idea.

Perhaps the demigod of the Church of Earth Mother was waiting to detect similar traces to pinpoint his location!

Moreover, Loki had realized that there was more than one demigod in the sky!

If there was only one, he could rely on Sealed Artifacts, bestowments, and other means to concentrate. He could conceal himself in the shadows and contend with them to see if he could endure until the marionette-making process was completed. However, there were at least two demigods observing.

More importantly, he could endure for about ten minutes, but an hour was out of the question!

After weighing the pros and cons, Loki abandoned his original plan to conduct the ritual today and advance to Sequence 4 Bizarro Sorcerer.

In any case, as long as he could restrain the sealed demigod, he could find another opportunity in the future. There was no need for him to perform today!

Why would it take an hour or more? Is this a demigod's Spirit Body Threads? Amidst Loki's confusion, he didn't intend to recall the two marionettes. He planned on using the mystical item to "teleport" away.

From his pocket, he retrieved a bracelet made of different-colored gems.

Just as Loki was about to activate a diamond, he heard the sound of swallowing.

Loki instinctively lowered his head and looked into his arms, realizing that Ludwig had awakened at some point.

With a sincere expression, the boy spoke with a hint of eagerness, "I'm hungry…"

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Chapter 583 - 583 Celestial Worthy's Revelation

583 Celestial Worthy's Revelation

583 Celestial Worthy's Revelation

Around the betrothal ship and sailboat, thick turquoise vines cascaded from the sky. They entwined, creating a "road" leading to various destinations.

"Cinderella" returned to the orange-yellow pumpkin coach, pulled by gray mice swiftly descending through the vines. They approached the energy passageway formed by pure light, as if about to enter the silver-gray behemoth embedded in the seabed.

Abruptly, the mischief of gray mice came to a halt. "Cinderella," adorned in a purple robe, wore a solemn expression, purple spots dancing in her pupils.

"Cinderella" sensed an unusually perilous presence deep within the silver-

gray behemoth. It remained motionless, as if in a deep slumber or long dead. However, in either case, her intuition warned her not to approach, lest she suffer severe corruption or similar effects.

Staring at the energy passageway where Lumian and company had vanished, she deliberated for a few seconds before shifting her focus to the sailboat.

With Mr. Fool's seal on the Seven of Wands and the sealed evil god's angel, he didn't have to worry about the problem that even she had to be wary of—as long as he didn't directly see those things, hear its voice, or enter the core area.

As for the other one, he seemed to be a Shepherd, so he didn't mind being even crazier.

"Cinderella" observed the mast and shipboard of the sailboat cracking under the terrifying suction of the humanoid Sealed Artifact's "heaviness" characteristic. She was ready to make her move when she retrieved a Roselle chess piece from her dark-purple coin bag and hurled it at the target in the black nun's attire.

Amidst the howling wind, the Queen chess piece soared towards the humanoid Sealed Artifact, accompanied by various miscellaneous items.

As it descended, the humanoid Sealed Artifact's steps towards the sailboat slowed, as if time itself was warping around her.

This was one of the spells of “Cinderella”—the Chessboard of Ages.

It had the power to decelerate the target as if they had entered an area where time moved at a different speed.

Seizing the opportunity presented by the sluggish movement, “Cinderella” closed her eyes and transformed into a humanoid phantom, collapsing into the invisible coffin.

The eyelids of the humanoid Sealed Artifact drooped, as if she might succumb to sleep at any moment.

Sleeping Beauty magic!

Witnessing this, Hela, aboard the sailboat, once again activated the Evernight pathway’s ability to forcibly drag people into a dream.

Although the notarization wouldn’t immediately expire with Ultraman Lato Guiaro’s loss of the Governor of the Sea authority, it would still last until the end. However, the ability to be invalidated by notarization wasn’t entirely ineffective. It would only be weakened, and its effects would be significantly reduced. Now, the humanoid Sealed Artifact was already fatigued, swaying and on the verge of falling asleep.

In this state, entering a dream was undoubtedly much easier.

The humanoid Sealed Artifact, donned in a black nun’s attire, finally closed her eyes and plunged into a deep slumber. She entered a somewhat sorrowful dream, causing her face to contort slightly as she frowned.

On the sailboat, a dense darkness surged once more, enveloping the humanoid Sealed Artifact, resonating with a distant voice that brought peace and tranquility.

It was akin to a mother reciting a poem to lull her child to sleep, fostering a serene slumber.

The humanoid Sealed Artifact, still in her black nun’s attire, hovered in midair with her eyes tightly shut. She descended slowly, landing gracefully on the deck of the sailboat.

Her brows gradually relaxed, her face softened, and crystalline water droplets formed at the corners of her eyes.

The Maidens of the Sea, deputy hosts, and sailors, blessed by the sea and adorned with starlight scales, swiftly settled in the darkness, succumbing to sleep amidst the enchanting chanting.

Franca, within the sail cabin, was taken aback by the unfolding battle.

I-isn’t that Cinderella?

I-isn’t that Jack and the Beanstalk?

What manner of magic is this?

I-isn’t that Sleeping Beauty?

Who is this? Have I arrived in a fairyland?

I have to admit, it’s truly dreamlike…

Two demigods working together are undoubtedly formidable. They swiftly subdued the humanoid Sealed Artifact…

I also wish to become a demigod!

A Demoness demigod would do too…

Regaining her senses, Franca concealed herself and sprinted out of the sailboat. Utilizing her run-up and an Assassin’s Feather Fall, she elegantly leaped onto the betrothal ship, intending to approach the energy passageway at the bow.

…

Within the silver-gray behemoth.

After Lumian traversed the energy passageway, he found himself not in the metal beehive he had seen before.

Walking on the silvery-white metal floor, he noticed a hall dozens of meters long and 20 to 30 meters wide ahead.

In the middle of the hall, Ultraman Lato Guiaro stood, donning Simon Guiaro’s face, and shouted in delight, “*(…□#)”

This represented the first half of the command to activate the spaceship by entering the password and gaining access.

However, there was no response from the spaceship.

Crap… It still holds ill intentions towards me and isn’t willing to grant access… This malice stems from that demigod’s ability. It shouldn’t last long. As long as I can stall for time, I should be able to regain control… Can the humanoid Sealed Artifact hold back two demigods? Or can I rely on the spaceship’s internal layout to play “hide and seek?” A series of thoughts raced through Ultraman’s anxious mind.

At that moment, through the translucent metal wall to the side of the hall, he saw “Cinderella” in the pumpkin coach come to a halt near the energy passageway, seemingly apprehensive about something.

As expected!

She doesn't dare to enter!

Exhilaration surged from Ultraman Lato Guiaro's heart.

Before the mission kicked off, Loki had set up an altar and sought guidance from Celestial Worthy through divination. The response he got was: Contains a high risk from high-ranking individuals. Avoidable by entering the spaceship.

Loki decoded this as a warning about Hela and Gandalf from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, as well as the Saint from the Church of Earth Mother overlooking Port Santa. These high-ranking figures were the primary threats. However, if he could take the reins of the mystical sci-fi spaceship first, he believed he could outmaneuver these formidable opponents.

Now, Lato Guiaro noticed that even without absolute control of the spaceship, the new demigod hesitated, as if haunted by an unseen fear.

Facing something capable of unsettling a demigod left Lato Guiaro uneasy. However, armed with the spaceship's command and password, he could soon turn potential threats to his advantage. There was no need for fear.

As Lumian was on the brink of "teleporting" behind Ultraman Lato Guiaro, they both heard a metallic clang.

A silver metal door descended, sealing off the hall's entrance and exit completely.

The walls, ceiling, and floor transformed as metal surfaces shifted and revealed dark pipe openings.

Out gushed cerulean-blue gas.

Poison gas! Lato Guiaro's heart raced as he grasped the situation.

The spaceship, still imbued with malice, not only resisted control but also emanated lethal intent, seeking to eliminate him before its animosity subsided.

The magic of the demigod outside is malicious indeed!

Lumian perceived this as an instinctive strike from the silver-gray behemoth against intruders. Swiftly, he tapped into the power of the sea, aiming to invoke the temporary authority of the Governor of the Sea to counter the threat.

He could sense that Ultraman had lost the Governor of the Sea's position after the attack from the "Cinderella" demigod, with no immediate prospect of reclaiming it. With no contenders for the authority, Lumian anticipated an easy acquisition.

Yet, the "waters" resisted, refusing Lumian the temporary position of Governor of the Sea.

Its malice seemed directed at anyone attempting control!

Undeterred, Lumian shifted his focus back to Ultraman Lato Guiaro, a crucial member of April Fool's.

Lato Guiaro's heart stirred as he shouted, "Do you want to fight here? If we don't break out and waste no time, we'll all die!"

In this dire moment, a plan to escape the hall and relocate became paramount. The malice wouldn't linger for long.

Seek vengeance in a safe space. If we perish here, who will assist in eliminating the others?

Lumian nonchalantly flexed his wrists, donning the Flog boxing gloves, and grinned, stating,

"I don't care about my own death. All that matters now is one thing: Ending you!"

As the words left his lips, crimson flames, bordering on white, erupted from his entire being, as if he were cloaked in a fiery shroud.

…

Not far from Lumian and Lato Guiaro, Mad Lady and Mr. K found themselves in the beehive-like metal room, unable to enter the hall ahead.

Surveying the surroundings, Mr. K's gaze swept across the incubating Batings Black Insect, Little Devils, and other creatures. He nodded in satisfaction.

"It's indeed the power of an evil god, spawn of an evil god. Well done, Lumian! Well done! This is all part of God's arrangement!"

Amidst the hoarse voice, the Aurora Order Oracle turned his gaze back to Mad Lady.

Mad Lady wasn't intimidated. Instead, she applauded in agreement with Mr. K.

She spoke as if they were on different frequencies.

"That's right, it's cool, right? This is a spaceship!"

In the next moment, Mad Lady and Mr. K vanished simultaneously and reappeared behind where the other party had been standing, as if they had negotiated a position switch beforehand.

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Chapter 584 - 584 “Helper”

584 “Helper”

584 “Helper”

Inside the underwater spaceship, in the silvery hall.

Lumian, enveloped by crimson, nearly white flames, transformed into a fireball and hurtled towards Ultraman Lato Guiaro.

The key April Fool’s member remained composed. Holding his breath, he thrust forward with his left palm.

Lumian instantly sensed an invisible force resisting him, causing the blazing crimson fireball to decelerate abruptly, akin to a trapped insect in transparent amber.

Seizing the moment, Lato Guiaro raised his right hand, clenching it into a fist.

A ball of blazing white pure sunlight condensed and compressed, swiftly morphing into a thick, formidable laser aimed at Lumian, fused with the crimson near-white fireball.

This ability resulted from merging the Sun pathway and the Sea boon, utilizing the power of the Sun pathway to propel the Sea boon’s Weakening Ray. Though it no longer altered the target’s body gradually, causing various negative symptoms, its penetration and melting effects were significantly enhanced, capable of directly injuring or even killing the target.

In the enclosed, poisonous gas-filled environment with the constant threat of malice, Lato Guiaro sought to conclude the battle swiftly rather than wait for Lumian Lee to weaken gradually. Thus, he opted for Sun Ray instead of Weakening Ray.

At laser speed, Sun Ray struck the crimson fireball, melting a substantial hole into it.

The fireball lost its structural integrity and exploded, scattering like rain.

Yet, Lumian was nowhere among the remnants. He seemed to have vanished into thin air.

Simultaneously, behind Ultraman Lato Guiaro, Lumian’s figure, adorned with the Lie earring, swiftly materialized.

Initially, Lumian transformed into a fireball and soared towards Lato Guiaro, intending to force him into using Beyonder powers and counterattack. This allowed him to “fix” his original location, not shifting prematurely, creating an opportunity to “teleport” behind the target in the fireball state for a surprise attack.

Having faced bestowed of the sea before, Lumian was aware of Lato Guiaro’s ability to manipulate the weight or floatation of objects using the power of the land and stars, altering their speed.

To successfully use Spirit World Traversal in his fireball form, Lumian borrowed Lie’s Flame Controlling ability.

As his figure materialized, he promptly opened his mouth and hissed at Ultraman Lato Guiaro, less than two meters away.

“Ha!”

A pale-yellow beam, resembling gas, shot towards the April Fool’s key member.

Lato Guiaro didn’t have time to turn around, sensing the impending danger through his fate perception, a skill obtained from deciphering the Language of the Stars Beyonder powers.

Specks of starlight emerged in his eyes. He identified several “passages” in the silver hall suffused with cerulean-blue gasses, imperceptible to ordinary humans. Hastily choosing one, he pounced over—a navigating ability bestowed by the sea.

Simultaneously, uncertain of evading the attack from behind, Lato Guiaro infused the surroundings with layers of golden light.

This was the Purification Halo of a Sequence 5 Priest of Light of the Sun pathway.

Amidst the harrumph, the pale-yellow beam swept past Lato Guiaro’s back, hidden somewhere in the void.

The key member of April Fool’s, code name Ultraman, fainted, but his momentum remained. He continued into the illusory passageway, hidden from ordinary eyes, traversing space and dimensions.

Lumian, within two meters, couldn’t “teleport” away in time and was enveloped by the Purification Halo.

His heart ached, as if something sought to tear his body apart and crawl out.

Faintly, he heard the illusory ravings of the entity known as Inevitability, Mr. Fool, or both.

Unclear but unsettling, they made Lumian’s brain feel pulled out of his skull by an invisible hand.

Despite an Ascetic's endurance, Lumian couldn't help but groan in pain. Collapsing to the ground, he curled up.

A similar experience occurred in his Cordu dream, a reaction after being sprinkled by Valentine's holy water. Lato Guiaro's Purification Halo, an advanced Sun Halo, had evolved from harmless to a partial Sun Holy Water effect. It could exorcize evil spirits and purify the evil power within a target's body.

As Lato Guiaro lay unconscious, the Purification Halo vanished in a flash, only partially dispelling the poisonous gas.

Similarly, the unconscious Lato Guiaro couldn't progress through the illusory passageway, breaking free and falling three to four meters in front of Lumian. The impact left him in pain, slowly regaining consciousness.

At that moment, Lumian slowly recovered from the intense pain induced by the Purification Halo.

Lato Guiaro, just waking up and still uncertain of the situation, instinctively re-entered the illusory passageway to increase the distance between himself and Lumian Lee. This move aimed to avoid another strike from Lumian's Psychic Piercing-like ability or any other unforeseen attacks.

Upon crawling back to the hall through the exit of the illusory passageway, Lumian had already raised his head and regained his composure, though his forehead was soaked in cold sweat.

Observing this, Lato Guiaro felt neither pity, disappointment, nor regret. Instead, he was pleasantly surprised.

It's effective!

Purification Halo is effective against Lumian Lee!

After confirming that the adventurer Louis Berry was indeed Lumian Lee, Lato Guiaro contemplated how to strategize if he were to engage in a battle with him.

It was simple with the authority of the Governor of the Sea. He could repeatedly cast the other party into the Cosmic Void, making him lose himself over and over. Without the Governor of the Sea's authority, he had to consider how to exploit Lumian Lee's vulnerabilities.

Lumian Lee's unique characteristics were clear—possessing a sealing power of the same origin as the Celestial Worthy, with a high-ranking creature sealed within him.

Beyonders in this state often had false high-level statuses and enjoyed numerous conveniences, but they were susceptible to the Sun pathway's abilities.

Lato Guiaro wasn't certain about the effectiveness of the Sun Halo, Cleave of Purification, and other abilities, nor was he sure of the Purification Halo's potency. The only certainty lay in the effectiveness of the Sun Holy Water he could create.

Therefore, if the Purification Halo proved ineffective against Lumian Lee, he would swiftly produce Sun Holy Water and sprinkle it on him.

Looking at Lumian, Lato Guiaro smiled, once again dyeing the surroundings golden as layer after layer spread out.

This sealed environment was ideal for employing the Purification Halo. It denied Lumian Lee a chance to distance himself or "teleport" closer. The entire hall was essentially enveloped by the Purification Halo!

Furthermore, in the spaceship, there was no fear of Lumian Lee losing control and transforming into a monster, unleashing the high-level creature within his body. An intruder at this level would inevitably trigger the spaceship's automatic defense system targeting him. Lato Guiaro might then seize control of the spaceship!

Didn't your sister tell you something Emperor Roselle once said?

If you rely on something to obtain specialness and become stronger, you will definitely be punished because of it!

Upon seeing the surging layers of golden light, Lumian raised his right hand and vanished.

Where is he "teleporting" to this time? As long as he's in the hall, he can't avoid the Purification Halo! Lato Guiaro watched the other party's struggle with certainty and a smile.

Unless Lumian Lee chose to leave the hall, it was impossible for him not to be affected by the Purification Halo. With the spaceship's barrier raised, the door closed, and the place sealed, and using the unique power of the sea, if he wanted to "teleport" out, he had to first destroy the surrounding walls or metal doors to create an exit.

This was also advantageous for Lato Guiaro.

No one knew what the spaceship would unleash in this hall next!

Layer after layer of Purification Halos rapidly "drowned" Lumian's original location, but nothing happened. Lumian's figure was nowhere to be seen in the silver-white hall.

Wh… Lato Guiaro's pupils constricted.

Where did Lumian Lee go?

Is his teleportation ability unaffected by the sealed interior of the spaceship?

Or has he gone into hiding?

Lato Guiaro's heart skipped a beat; he extended his right hand and pulled.

The void in the hall stirred, unveiling an abnormal area nestled between two walls, flanked by dark holes emitting cerulean-blue gas.

Creating an unstable space and hiding inside to avoid the Purification Halo? That's true. The Purification Halo's purpose is to exorcize, purify, warm, and provide courage. Without substantial offensive power, it can't destroy the structure of that space… Lumian Lee actually possesses such an ability. Lato Guiaro quickly saw through Lumian's trick. Calmly raising his right hand, he condensed a penetrating dark-green ray.

Simultaneously, he harnessed his basic control over gravity to pull at the fabricated space.

The dark-green ray struck the spot where it had been pulled, instantly penetrating and obliterating the structure.

Silently shattered, the dark-green ray continued forward, hitting a silver-

white full-body armor with its back turned to Lato Guiaro.

The dark-green ray, now weakened to a certain extent, faded away.

The silver-white full-body armor suddenly pivoted, and two pairs of eyes appeared to lock onto Lato Guiaro from within the vacant helmet.

In the next moment, it charged toward the April Fool's key member, forming a broadsword of light in its hand.

As the silver-white full-body armor rushed out, Lumian's figure emerged in the corner.

He had utilized the terrain there to arrange a simple Bottle of Fiction, using the large hole that emitted poisonous gas as a symbolic window. His goal was twofold: first, to evade the influence of the Purification Halo, and second, to position the Pride Armor with its back facing Lato Guiaro.

Yes, this cursed armor might only target someone standing a certain distance behind it, but it might not. What if that person not only stood more than ten meters behind it but also attempted to attack it by stabbing it in the back?

The answer was clear!

Now, Lumian had a capable helper unafraid of the Purification Halo.

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Chapter 585 - 585 Repeated “Betrayal”

585 Repeated “Betrayal”

585 Repeated “Betrayal”

At a distance of just over ten meters, the Pride Armor covered the ground in two powerful strides, positioning itself in front of Ultraman Lato Guiaro. A broadsword, condensed from radiant light, slashed down with deadly precision.

Lato Guiaro had a momentary opportunity to utilize his Navigator ability, escape through hidden passageways in the void and dimensions, and evade the impending attack. However, the sight of the silver-white full-body armor caught him off guard; he hadn’t anticipated an aggressive move before Lumian Lee could even don the armor!

This momentary hesitation cost him. The silver-white full-body armor, resembling a relentless steam locomotive, collided with him before he could vanish into the hidden tunnel. By then, it was too late, and the looming threat of being cleaved apart became imminent—a grim fate of upper and lower halves separated.

In this dire circumstance, he was no earthworm with regenerative abilities; his fate seemed sealed.

Facing the approaching silver-white armor and its raised broadsword of light, scales formed from starlight protruded from various parts of Lato Guiaro’s body.

The air quivered around him, as if an invisible tide were roaring, amplifying the tension.

As per the intel gathered on April Fool’s, the power derived from the “sea” without the Governor of the Sea’s authority corresponded to a Sequence 5 at most, known as Tidal Scholar—the current state of Lato Guiaro.

Enveloped by an ethereal tide, Lato Guiaro swung his fist, resembling a colossal wave crashing down.

Thud!

His formidable punch collided with the side of the broadsword of light, forcefully diverting its trajectory.

Simultaneously, Lumian materialized behind him, left hand raised.

Indeed! I knew you'd seize this chance to teleport behind me and launch a sneak attack! Lato Guiaro was ready. Evading the silver-white full-body armor's second strike, he imbued the surroundings in a warm golden hue.

Purification Halo!

As layers of golden light surged towards Lumian, he deftly twisted his left wrist.

Even before that, the silver-white Lie earring on his left earlobe emitted a subtle glow, revealing various blobs of light and colors on Ultraman's body. Among them, a golden ball emitted a warm glow—the representation of the Purification Halo ability.

With a flick of his wrist, the golden ball detached from Ultraman's body and swiftly flew to Lumian.

Steal!

Lumian successfully "stole" Ultraman's Purification Halo!

The number of times the Ring of the Sea Queen could "steal" after the standard process remained unknown to Lumian. However, he was certain that Lie's "stealing" effect persisted for half a month, unaffected by his "stealing" of the sea's power.

After Lie's transformation on the ancestral altar in Milo Village, Lumian diligently experimented with Steal, honing his proficiency to ensure he could deploy it effectively in critical moments. Thus, he had become relatively adept at stealing and dispersing the power of the sea.

Simultaneously, Ultraman's Beyonder powers of the Sun pathway were well-

documented by the Tarot Club's information, making Lumian fully aware of what he aimed to Steal this time. With a solid foundation in mysticism knowledge, he felt prepared.

However, the challenge lay in his lack of experience "stealing" a Priest of Light's abilities. He feared that locating the corresponding symbols for Purification Halo and Holy Water Creation might take too long, leaving him vulnerable to Lato Guiaro's attacks.

Anticipating the Pride Armor's frontal assault, Lumian strategically teleported four to five meters behind Lato Guiaro, enticing him to use Purification Halo.

The distinction between the abilities Lumian used and those he refrained from was clear, providing him with instant recognition.

Before initiating the teleport, he activated the Lie earring and raised his left hand, ensuring he didn't linger in the dangerous area for a moment longer.

The Purification Halo, despite being “stolen,” persisted and continued to surge, enveloping Lumian.

However, it didn’t reach its intended target. A formidable formless force emanated from Lumian’s body, acting as a barrier that thwarted the encroaching halo.

The power of the sea!

You have the power of the sea, and so do I!

During the Steal process, Lumian had reserved a portion of the sea’s power for himself. Although not on par with Ultraman’s, it proved sufficient to repel the Purification Halo for a brief moment.

Calmly activating the black mark on his right shoulder, Lumian vanished from the warm golden area, teleporting to the farthest corner from Lato Guiaro.

The Purification Halo pursued relentlessly, but it reached its limit, visibly weakening.

Reacting swiftly, Lumian harnessed the power of the sea once more, watching as the warm golden barrier rapidly dissipated.

Meanwhile, Lato Guiaro’s heart skipped a beat.

Intuitively, he sensed the loss of his Purification Halo ability, suspecting it had been “stolen”!

Lumian Lee’s item with the Steal effect is still operational? Lato Guiaro couldn’t dwell on it. Dodging the Pride Armor’s heavy slashes, he fell to the ground, rolling to evade the attacks. Facing the sky, he raised his right hand, clenching it.

Pure and blazing sunlight condensed rapidly, forming a thick ray that struck the silver-white armor’s chest.

It paused momentarily, unable to penetrate, only burning and dissolving into tottering black marks.

Witnessing this and recognizing Lumian Lee as his adversary, Ultraman Lato Guiaro entertained the idea of fleeing. He decided to disengage, cease the confrontation, and seek an escape route.

At that critical moment, instead of launching a barrage of attacks, the Pride Armor shifted its focus toward Lumian.

Lumian, who had previously utilized Spirit World Traversal on the betrothal ship and within the hall, found himself affected once again by the Purification Halo. His spirituality teetered on the brink of depletion, leaving him visibly fatigued and weakened.

Any ordinary human in such a state near the Pride Armor would face indiscriminate attacks.

Wh… Lato Guiaro keenly perceived the shift in dynamics.

Though unaware of the specifics, he sensed an advantage.

Rising abruptly, he directed his attention to Lumian.

In the next instant, the Pride Armor raised its radiant broadsword and charged towards Lumian.

Haha, your Sealed Artifact has betrayed you! Lato Guiaro mocked internally as he closed in, intending to exploit the silver-white full-body armor's attack to create Sun Holy Water and sprinkle it on Lumian Lee.

Undeterred, Lumian took a resolute step forward.

Tapping into his Ascetic powers, the accumulated strength and spirituality within his body surged, replenishing his drained spirit. His body underwent a sudden transformation, growing by seven to eight centimeters and bulking up by two sizes, causing his loosely fitting deputy host's robe to strain.

The advancing Pride Armor abruptly halted, pivoting to face Lato Guiaro, who had followed closely.

Lato Guiaro's pupils contracted, and an instant heaviness enveloped his body, bringing him to a natural halt.

Simultaneously, his gaze locked onto the unusually tall figure of Lumian Lee.

The enemy teleported right in front of him, mere inches away. Their eyes locked, reflecting each other in an intense confrontation.

With a swift whoosh, Lumian swung his right hand, adorned with the Flog boxing gloves, through the air.

Lato Guiaro's "heavy" state naturally exerted a suction force on his surroundings, a downgraded version of the humanoid Sealed Artifact's characteristic. Lumian's punch encountered no repulsion; instead, it accelerated towards its target.

Unperturbed by the close-range attacks, Lato Guiaro harbored concerns about Lumian's Psychic Piercing ability. Unable to dodge or employ other abilities in time, he unleashed a retaliatory fist resembling a thousand tonnes of seawater, causing the sound of surging tides to echo.

Bang!

Lato Guiaro blocked Lumian's attack and swiftly rolled to the side, evading a surprise assault from the Pride Armor.

At that moment, a strong sense of greed surged within him, overshadowing his initial plan to escape.

Seizing the opportunity, Lumian retreated and retrieved a black bone flute with red holes from his Traveler's Bag.

Symphony of Hatred!

While Lato Guiaro resisted the Pride Armor, Lumian brought the flute to his mouth and played a sharp, intense melody.

Lato Guiaro's mind buzzed, freezing him in place.

Bright blood oozed from the cracks in the starlight scales on his body.

Emotional Detonation!

Pfft! The Pride Armor struck Lato Guiaro's shoulder, splintering scales, bone, and flesh.

Closing the distance with two brisk strides, Lumian approached the nearly collapsed Lato Guiaro, his face twisted in pain. He raised the black bone flute in his hand.

In the moment that Lato Guiaro used the pain from the Pride Armor strike to break free from the detonated emotions, he witnessed Lumian Lee thrusting the bone flute toward him with a fierce expression.

Pfft!

The bone flute effortlessly pierced Lato Guiaro's left eye, akin to cutting through butter.

The eyeball of April Fool's key member exploded, and a gruesome mix of blood and other fluids streamed out through the gaps in the black bone flute.

Even if the Symphony of Hatred only struck an ordinary part, it was tantamount to hitting a vital point. Striking a true vital point meant either instant death or a prolonged period of social death. In this case, Lato Guiaro's left eye and brain were undeniably vital points.

His remaining eye widened and protruded, life force rapidly draining as he slumped to the ground.

Lumian seized Ultraman's neck, lifting him up. Releasing his right hand, which held the black bone flute, he delivered a heavy slap to Lato Guiaro's face. With a fierce expression, he growled in Intisian, "Did you go to Cordu Village to confirm the situation?"

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Chapter 586 - 586 Gnawing

586 Gnawing

Ultraman Lato Guiaro, his life rapidly slipping away, fell into a daze. Even his thoughts of self-preservation became blurred.

In the haze, he vaguely saw Juan Oro, the wrinkled old man, standing in the middle of the sea, waving with a mix of joy and mockery.

At that moment, Lumian's voice resonated from the horizon, faint, ethereal, and elusive.

"Did you go to Cordu Village to confirm the situation?"

Cordu Village? The time Mad Lady and I visited Nolfi, and went there just out of convenience? Lato Guiaro lost focus, and Lumian's figure reflected in his closed eye.

With the intent to annoy, he spoke his last words in Highlander.

"I've been there… with Mad Lady. It was… simply for fun… but Loki… seemed to… have ulterior…"

Don't you want to know what happened back then? Sure, I'll speak in Highlander. It's your problem if you don't understand. Your fault for not taking this language seriously in the past!

Lato Guiaro knew his actions wouldn't practically affect Lumian Lee. This was because Lumian Lee could find someone to perform dream divination, hypnosis, or undergo a real dream when he returned. From there, he could memorize the Highlander he spoke and find a way to translate it into Intisian or ancient Feysac.

Still, he just wanted to annoy the other party. About to die, he couldn't care less about future developments.

"Motives…" Lato Guiaro uttered his last word as his life extinguished.

In that final moment, he seemed to hear Lumian Lee speaking to him in Highlander, "Thank you."

The "thank you" flowed naturally, carrying a strong sense of mockery.

Ultraman Lato Guiaro's intact eye bulged even more, his expression freezing on his face, his breath coming to a complete halt.

Lumian's right hand gripped the Symphony of Hatred once more. Simultaneously, he released his left hand, watching Ultraman's key member's head rapidly detach from the black bone flute with red holes, revealing a sinister and deep blood-red hole.

Thud!

Ultraman collapsed to the ground. The sticky blood on the black bone flute coalesced and dripped onto his body.

After the person who had backstabbed it suffered a fatal wound, Pride Armor stopped moving and stood nearby, resembling an ordinary silver-white full-

body armor without any special characteristics.

Loki had ulterior motives? A motive other than helping the Sinners and pulling a prank? As Lumian recalled Ultraman's confession before his death, he bent down to check what items this April Fool's key member had.

Of course, he didn't hold much hope. Ultraman Lato Guiaro had disguised himself as the incoming Governor of the Sea, Simon Guiaro, to board the betrothal ship. Carrying no items, his belongings should have been handed over to Mad Lady, allowing her to conceal them using flesh and blood magic in his stomach. However, Mad Lady clearly didn't have the time or opportunity to return the items to Ultraman.

This was one of the reasons why Lumian could eliminate Ultraman, a powerful dual pathway Beyonder, in such a short period.

If Juan Oro hadn't tipped off the sea spawn on the bridal boat beforehand, Lumian would've been forced to stash his Traveler's Bag temporarily with Mr. K.

At that moment, Lumian observed a strange transformation in the corpse of Ultraman Lato Guiaro.

It swiftly faded, morphing into a semi-translucent, semi-flesh state. Then, like it was being disintegrated by countless tiny creatures, it oozed into the silver metal floor and gradually vanished.

Soon, the remnants of flesh, starlight, and sun-like fragments left by Lato Guiaro were absorbed by the silver metallic floor, leaving behind only a Sea Governor ceremonial robe, shrouded in a faint grayish-white fog.

In the blink of an eye, the grayish-white fog got absorbed by the silver metallic floor and the mysterious structure.

Lumian attempted unsuccessfully to "reclaim" something.

Is this what it means to return to the sea? But why did this peculiar structure absorb the Priest of Light's Beyonder characteristic? Just as Lumian pondered, the

sound of metal grinding surrounded him.

The pitch-black holes in the surrounding walls, ceiling, and floor once again got concealed by rotating, protruding metal. No more cerulean-blue poisonous gas spewed out, saving Lumian the energy to engulf his body in a layer of crimson, almost white flames.

Amidst the clanking sounds, two metallic doors ascended, revealing two tunnels leading to different destinations.

With the target of the betrayal now gone, the silver-gray behemoth reverted to its "normal" state.

Lumian peered into the depths of the tunnel ahead, his heart involuntarily racing.

Badump! Badump! He felt inexplicably nervous and uneasy.

…

In Port Santa, the apartment Loki was hiding.

The moment Ludwig declared, "I'm hungry," he swiftly bowed his head and sank his teeth into Loki's hand, gripping the gemstone bracelet as if devouring the marrow from a chicken wing.

An intense wave of pain surged through Loki's mind. His immediate instinct was to deploy Paper Figurine Substitutes, a desperate attempt to break free from the current situation.

Yet, he hesitated, fearing that such a move might create an insurmountable distance between him and the sealed demigod, eliminating any chance of regaining control.

Amidst the gruesome symphony of bones crunching and flesh tearing, Loki snatched the falling gemstone bracelet with his free hand and forcibly pried open his mouth.

Bang!

A rush of air slammed into Ludwig's head, akin to a bullet fired from the latest steam rifle, ripping through flesh and hair to reveal a ghastly white skull.

However, Ludwig remained unfazed. Gnawing on Loki's left hand, he had already severed five fingers and devoured half of the palm.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Air Bullets relentlessly pounded the boy, leaving him mangled and disfigured. Yet, Ludwig persisted in his attentive nibbling on Loki.

Crack, crack.

He had already crunched down on the other party's wrist bone, a crisp sound echoing through their intertwined flesh.

As Loki nearly blacked out from the pain, he roughly grasped what was happening.

The sealed demigod possessed incredible vitality. Ordinary attacks and Beyonder powers couldn't cause significant harm. In simpler terms, he could put him to sleep or manipulate his Spirit Body Threads to knock him out, but killing him with regular means proved challenging. It couldn't even seriously injure him.

In such circumstances, even if the sealed demigod couldn't utilize any abilities, lacking sufficient strength and speed, merely devouring the other party's flesh and bones with all his might posed an abnormal challenge for many Mid-Sequence Beyonders.

Loki abandoned the idea of retrieving other mystical items and substituted himself with a paper figurine.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Ludwig, his head covered in signs of Air Bullet destruction and almost devoid of human form, raised his head. Beside his bloodstained mouth was a piece of white paper that quickly swept into his mouth alongside the blood-colored flesh.

Ludwig's eyes reflected Loki's outline in the corner of the room. Something beneath his torn skin and flesh seemed to squirm slowly, attempting to break free, but to no avail.

Loki assessed the situation and the items on him. With the Soul Assurer marionette unable to return in time, he sensibly chose not to confront the sealed demigod creature. He would flee first before considering the future.

At that moment, a crimson moonlight streamed through the window.

The moonlight bathed the apartment, wrapping around Loki.

Loki heard a fleeting voice.

"A strong smell of blood…"

As the moonlight faded, a grayish-white and pitch-black paper figurine appeared on the ground.

Loki's figure materialized a few hundred meters away, outside a vine forest.

It was a boon bestowed by the Celestial Worthy during a prayer some weeks before this operation. It had been attached to a pre-prepared paper figurine, forming such a potent substitute that bordered on godhood.

Drip, drip. Blood still dripped from Loki's bitten left wrist.

He activated the diamond on the bracelet and swiftly faded away, preparing to teleport.

…

Port Santa, Milo Village.

Tap, tap, tap.

The soft patter of footsteps reverberated in Bard's ears, causing him to tense.

Bard surveyed his surroundings, finding nothing amiss.

He sprinted, weaving through several buildings, yet the rhythmic tapping of footsteps persisted behind him.

Attempting to force open a door and seek refuge in a villager's house in Milo Village,

Bard was met with an unexpected sight. Instead of the familiar kitchen, tables, chairs, and household items, his eyes beheld a decrepit stone platform enveloped in darkness.

The stone platform! Bard's pupils widened, as if he had entered an unreal illusion.

He found himself back at the residence of the Governor of the Sea and the altar where Milo Village's inhabitants paid homage to their ancestor.

Something crawled out from a crack in the worn stone platform.

A translucent worm, adorned with multiple rings, swiftly expanded, transforming into a young man donned in the attire of a sea prayer ritual's deputy host, monocle in place.

Seated on the weathered stone platform, the man grinned at Bard.

"Do you comprehend?"

Bard suddenly grasped the meaning behind the question. Swallowing hard, he replied, "Understood."

Since the altar had an owner and Beyonder creatures residing there, the so-

called rule that it could only be enchanted once a year for the Ring of the Sea Queen clearly didn't hold true!

The other party could affix the power as many times as desired!

The young man, clad in a dark-blue deputy host's sacrificial robe, toyed with the monocle in his right eye and smirked.

“Over a millennium, I’ve molded the rule that the Steal ability can only be conferred once a year. Little did I expect to deceive you all in the end.”

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Chapter 587 - 587 “Deceived”

587 “Deceived”

Upon hearing the young man’s words, Bard felt his blood rush to his head.

Crafting a seemingly valid rule over a millennium to deceive others?

What kind of lame antique Swindler is this?

Bard blurted out, “The patterns on the altar and the surrounding arrangements are also fake?”

The young man in the dark-blue deputy host robe chuckled.

“If it wasn’t real, would you have been deceived?

“Furthermore, I occasionally venture out. When I do, it grants Steal powers on my behalf. Of course, with the spirituality produced by the surrounding worshippers, it can indeed only bestow once a year.”

As the young man spoke, the smile on his face widened.

Bard’s forehead throbbed as he listened, feeling like he had been mocked.

According to the other party’s claim that the Steal powers could be bestowed at will, the Ring of the Sea Queen should have been complete and equipped with all its functions. So, why did the success of the sea prayer ritual experience such a significant delay?

Unable to comprehend the situation, Bard turned around and sprinted towards the exit.

It wasn’t that he hadn’t considered begging for mercy and surrendering on the spot, but these things could be done later. For now, he wanted to take a gamble, betting that the other party’s claim of occasionally venturing out was a lie. In essence, he believed he was trapped in the altar, unable to venture anywhere and influence the people around him. If he allowed himself to be intimidated and didn’t dare to escape, he would fall into the other party’s trap, cheated of his freedom and future.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Bard reached the staircase in a few steps and ran up.

The more he ran, the happier he became. The monocle-wearing young man didn’t stop him.

I made the right bet!

He's the core of that altar. There's no way to leave!

Thud! Thud! Thud! Bard witnessed the scene on the first floor illuminated by sunlight.

Amidst his ecstasy, his thoughts suddenly shattered. He felt the darkness around him being pierced by the light, shattering into pieces.

Bard bolted upright, alarmed to find himself lying in the servant's room at the Governor of the Sea's residence. He hadn't left.

He surveyed his surroundings and heard cheers and crackers from outside.

I just had a dream? Did it stem from a spirituality warning, helping me discover a problem with the plan? As Bard pondered these thoughts, he immediately dismissed the corresponding judgment. No, how could I have fallen asleep during the sea prayer ritual? Did I start dreaming after hearing soft footsteps in my room?

Bard rolled to his feet, slung his backpack over his shoulders, and tentatively pushed open the door, entering the corridor.

No longer smug with the plan that required minimal risks or combat, Bard realized he couldn't share in the distribution of items. He couldn't teleport away directly, nor could he return to his original appearance or disguise himself as someone else.

Upon reaching the corridor, Bard noticed the Little Devils leaving the shadows and performing a strange celebratory dance.

He hadn't "communicated" with these sea spawn and knew their intelligence was roughly equivalent to that of ordinary dogs. They could be tamed and controlled, but direct communication was beyond them. However, the amazing thing was that Little Devils had the ability to record and recreate human words, even if they weren't sure of their meanings. Moreover, they could receive signals from their collaborators within a 100-meter radius.

The Little Devils ignored Bard as well. The sea prayer ritual had succeeded. According to their prior agreement, the fake Governor of the Sea could leave on his own.

Bard left the Governor of the Sea's residence and realized that the guards at the entrance weren't kneeling to thank the boon like before. The villagers of Milo Village at the docks were the same. Apart from a few who sincerely shouted that the sea prayer ritual had succeeded, the rest merely echoed what was happening and expressed their joy, with many preferring to release crackers.

Indeed, it was a dream. The villagers' reactions in the dream were too exaggerated… I should know that based on past experiences with sea prayer rituals, only the committee members of the Fisheries Guild and a few people with

strong sea bloodlines can sense the arrival of the sea's boon. Others with sea bloodlines wouldn't have a tangible sense. They'd slowly realize they've become stronger, or the changes are too weak to detect. Otherwise, the failure of the sea prayer ritual last year wouldn't have escaped the notice of Port Santa's citizens and would have only circulated within the core circle. Bard used the environment to quickly confirm the essence of his previous encounter.

He didn't dare relax, nor did he "again" head to the docks to admire the villagers being fooled. Instead, he turned to the road leading to Port Santa's city district.

Just as he stepped out of the ancient village, Bard spotted a figure ahead.

The man stood over 2.4 meters tall, clad in a simple linen robe and a hood, holding a thick staff.

"Gandalf…" Bard's heart tightened as he shouted.

With the dream just now, he thought he had been exposed, so he didn't pull off any act.

Gandalf, the president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, was taken aback and let out a deep chuckle.

"You're really fake."

H-he's not sure of my identity? Bard was taken aback, wishing he could slap himself.

…

Inside the underwater spaceship, in a metallic room reminiscent of a beehive.

Having failed to capture Mad Lady twice in a row, Mr. K's body underwent a sudden transformation, expanding to nearly three meters in height.

Fortunately, he wasn't adorned in actual clothes. The blood-colored cloak draped over him had morphed from his flesh and blood. Otherwise, even the loose robe would have succumbed to the drastic change.

Concurrently, Mr. K's skin darkened, assuming the appearance of thick and formidable armor. Crooked goat horns adorned with sinister patterns sprouted from his head, and a pair of bat-like wings, encircled in crimson and blue flames, emerged from his back.

A pungent smell of sulfur hung in the air.

Being a Sequence 5 Shepherd of the Secrets Suppliant pathway, Mr. K possessed the core ability of Grazing. This allowed him to fuse other people's souls with Beyonder characteristics or boon powers and utilize them uniquely. It was akin to grazing lambs for a deity.

Each Shepherd could graze up to seven souls, controlling only one at a time. In this state, Shepherds could employ their Beyonder abilities and three abilities corresponding to the souls. These were chosen during Grazing and remained fixed thereafter.

The most formidable aspect of Shepherds was their ability to Graze demigod-

level spirits, enabling them to contend with Saints for a limited duration.

Presently, Mr. K was using a Grazed Devil. He had selected Devil Transformation, Sulphur Fireball, and Sword of Lava in the past.

Mr. K deliberately chose to forgo Devil's most distinctive Danger Premonition because he believed it to be effective only when commanding the Devil's spirit. Under normal circumstances, he couldn't activate Grazing continuously. In any case, if grave danger loomed, a divine revelation would be provided by God. Failure to receive such guidance indicated wrongdoing, warranting divine punishment.

As the expansive bat wings on Mr. K's back unfolded, light-blue fireballs condensed, numbering almost twenty.

They indiscriminately bombarded every corner of the metallic beehive, creating an all-encompassing barrage to counter Mad Lady's elusive "flashes" throughout the space.

Rumble!

The explosion, a mix of fire and poison, wreaked havoc on the metallic hive, tearing apart the incubating Batings Black Insect, Little Devils, and other creatures.

Mad Lady abruptly halted as the Sulfur Fireball condensed.

Cloaked in a blood-colored dress, with grotesque flesh lumps on her face, an illusory, slowly flipping book materialized in her eyes. Faint recitations echoed around her.

Drawing a dagger, she genuflected and drove it into the metal floor of the hive.

Dawn-like light ascended, forming an almost invisible wall around her.

Rumble!

The shockwaves from the Sulfur Fireball's explosion and the poisonous pale-

blue fireball relentlessly struck the invisible barrier, causing it to sway, yet it stood resilient.

This was Protection of a Warrior Sequence 5.

Record, the core ability of a Sequence 6 Scribe of the Apprentice pathway, allowed the “recording” of others’ abilities for use, each recording usable only once. Scribes could even record Beyonder powers with godhood effects, but the success rate was minimal.

After the explosion’s aftershocks subsided, Mr. K, donned in a blood-colored cloak and resembling a colossal Devil, wielded a broadsword composed of crimson lava and pale-blue flames. He surged towards Mad Lady in two steps, slashing down.

The nearly invisible wall around Mad Lady couldn’t withstand the onslaught and finally shattered. As the illusory book in her eyes flipped, a robust and sharp Sword of Dawn materialized in her hand.

Excitedly, she swung her two-handed light sword.

Clang!

Mr. K’s strike sent Mad Lady, lacking a Warrior’s physique and strength, flying.

Though Mr. K hadn’t anticipated her determination to engage in close combat despite her limitations, the battle’s tempo remained unaffected. He advanced, wielding the lava broadsword once again.

Poof! The Mad Lady he struck suddenly thinned, transforming into a paper figurine consumed by sulfurous flames.

Paper Figurine Substitutes!

Mad Lady reappeared beside a demolished metal hive, her illusory book flipping once more.

She then stretched her arms, allowing a pure and magnificent blazing pillar of light to descend from the sky and strike Mr. K, who had attacked the paper effigy.

Priest of Light’s Light of Holiness!

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Chapter 588 - 588 Degree of Madness

588 Degree of Madness

Mr. K shifted instantaneously, tapping into the Grazed Traveler's soul. His eyes took on an otherworldly glow, as if concealing doors to different realms.

His form faded, and in an instant, a luminous white column surrounded by flames emerged, shrouding him within its fiery embrace.

In the ensuing moment, Mr. K, stripped of his Devil guise, materialized in a corner of the metallic beehive. His form liquefied, his flesh resembling dripping candle wax.

The Secrets Suppliant pathway symbolized corruption, its influence curtailed by the Sun pathway's capabilities.

Half-melted flesh and blood cascaded onto the metal floor, seeping into it in a bizarre manner. Soon, it was absorbed by the spaceship Mad Lady had earlier detailed. Even Mr. K felt the weight of an unseen force, as if an invisible hand pressed him down. His attempts to extricate himself from the metallic floor proved futile, and he continued sinking gradually.

Mad Lady, with grayish-green eyes gleaming, teleported near Mr. K.

Despite his blood-colored wax-drenched visage, Mr. K faced Mad Lady without a trace of fear. His focus remained fixed on the evil god's aura emanating from the metal hive—his ultimate target.

He switched the Grazed soul to an Arbiter pathway Beyonder, with two bolts of lightning gathering in the depths of his darkened eyes.

Psychic Piercing!

Mad Lady refrained from teleporting. The illusory book within her eyes flipped open, revealing the kaleidoscope of colors on Mr. K's body and the shifting hues of light during his Grazed soul transitions.

Excitement illuminated Mad Lady's face. Raising her right hand, she prepared to delicately twist it clockwise.

Steal!

This was an ability she had Recorded from Bard.

A sudden, intriguing notion captivated Mad Lady's thoughts—she yearned to witness the aftermath of stealing the Grazing ability from a Shepherd.

It was crucial to understand that her Steal ability was limited to just one from a target, devoid of any connections to the abilities that came with it. In essence, after snatching the Grazing ability, the soul, characteristics, and powers under Grazing's influence would persist within Mr. K's body.

In this state, Mad Lady pondered whether Shepherds would grapple with internal conflicts, the fusion of characteristics, or a loss of control akin to the switching between non-adjacent pathways.

Excitement bubbled within Mad Lady as she deliberately Blinked near Mr. K, compelling him to switch Grazed souls. She observed keenly, eager to discern which light aligned with Grazing.

As for Mr. K's reaction, she cared little.

You continue your fight; I continue my steal. Whoever dies first loses!

Simultaneously, the metal floor, saturated with Mr. K's flesh, quivered unexpectedly. A previously concealed door within the metal hive withdrew, unveiling a passageway that hinted at a silver metallic hall beyond.

A formidable suction force emanated from that direction. While her attempt to steal Mr. K's Grazing ability was underway, Mad Lady—lacking the strength—was propelled into the air. Dark-blond hair whipped around wildly as she soared toward the origin of the anomaly.

Meanwhile, Mr. K remained "locked" to the metal floor. Though his body swayed precariously, on the verge of being pulled away, he held his ground, unsteady yet resilient.

The face of the blood-colored wax-streaked Aurora Order Oracle betrayed an anxious expression.

The enemy was on the verge of escape!

The source of the evil god corruption had revealed itself!

Mr. K swiftly switched back to the corresponding Devil spirit, summoning a broadsword forged from crimson lava and pale-blue flames. Targeting his body adhered to the metal floor, he executed a slashing motion.

Beneath his calf, flesh promptly separated from his main body, the incision undergoing a mesmerizing melding of half-melting and half-reforming.

Having relinquished a portion of his flesh, Mr. K allowed pale-white, moist, and freshly-formed limbs to squirm out from the severed stump. Concurrently, he harnessed the formidable suction force to pursue Mad Lady and draw closer to the

source of corruption.

In midair, he witnessed Lumian, disguised, clutching the door frame in a struggle against the menacing suction. He observed the motionless silver-

white full-body armor seamlessly blending with the floor.

Mad Lady surged ahead, on the verge of “flying” past Lumian.

With a wave of her right hand, she emitted a greeting-like “hello”, her face radiating excitement and anticipation.

Lumian’s pupils constricted. Disregarding his precarious state, he harrumphed.

Two beams of white light shot forth from his nostrils, accurately aimed at Mad Lady but influenced by the tangible and enigmatic suction force. They bent and “plunged” deeper into the tunnel.

At that moment, Lumian’s grip on the silver metal door frame neared its breaking point, blood seeping from the strain.

Faintly, he sensed an abundance of flesh and skin deep within the tunnel, intertwining to shape a colossal structure resembling a pear-shaped bird’s nest.

Suspended in midair, fleshy ropes, as thick as two or three adult arms and covered in a translucent membrane, extended, linking the distant wall, the ceiling above, and the metal on the ground.

Within these flesh and blood tendrils, specks of starlight and a mysterious dark substance flowed into the massive pear-shaped object.

The bird’s nest-like structure was contracting inward, its various parts deeply sunken, delineating lines that hinted at a substantial disk.

The terrifying suction force, capable of manipulating both reality and mystery, emanated from this pear-shaped object composed of skin, flesh, and blood.

At that moment, the outlines on the pear-shaped object quivered, and all the indentations bulged and expanded.

With this transformation, fragments of starlight spilled from the fleshy bird’s nest, rushing into every cabin within the spaceship.

This event resembled the prior two releases of the sea’s power, yet lacked the grandeur and vastness, lacking the potential to rend apart anyone obstructing its path.

Lumian could already envision the repetitive expulsion, understanding that the silver-gray behemoth had amassed a power capable of threatening the seal. Year after year, it required the extraction of this accumulated pressure.

As the abundance of starlight scattered, the formidable suction force dissipated.

With two thuds, Mad Lady and Mr. K collided with the ground. One found herself in the tunnel leading to the fleshy "bird's nest," while the other lay in the silver hall where Lumian and Ultraman had previously battled.

Lumian released his grip, landing on the ground. His gaze swiftly fixated on the April Fool's key member, adorned with clumps of flesh and blood on her face.

Mad Lady sprang up, exclaiming to him and Mr. K, "Did you see that? Did you see that? That's an incubating deity. Yes, it should be a deity!"

Despite the intense fluctuations in Mad Lady's emotions, Mr. K discerned no sincerity in her tone.

Her mention of "deity" sounded more like "powerful and terrifying monster," a mere description.

In the next instant, Lumian materialized behind Mad Lady, who promptly vanished on the spot, "Blinking" closer to where the starlight had scattered.

Lumian, sensing danger instinctively, felt his heart quicken involuntarily.

He hesitated to delve too deeply into the tunnel, avoiding proximity to the flesh and blood "bird's nest" he had vaguely "seen" before. Unimaginable horrors were certain to unfold.

However, Mad Lady sprinted in that direction.

Let her venture deeper and potentially meet her end? Lumian's thoughts raced, torn between decisions.

Another second passed, and Mr. K teleported in front of Lumian, fervently pursuing Mad Lady.

In that moment, Lumian, who had often considered himself a bit eccentric, found himself yearning for a bit more normalcy from the duo ahead of him.

While he could comprehend Mr. K's choices and actions—rooted in unwavering faith in God and the pursuit of divine will, coupled with a hint of extremism—Mad Lady's conduct exceeded his expectations.

Drawing from I Know Someone's confession and Mad Lady's previous behavior, Lumian detected no signs of her fanatical devotion to the Celestial Worthy. Simultaneously, due to the ongoing conflict between the Celestial Worthy and Mr. Fool, she couldn't always rely on protection.

This raised a question for Lumian.

If Mad Lady consistently courted danger, how had she managed to survive to this day?

April Fool's lacked the strict hierarchy and coordination seen in the Aurora Order. Most of the time, members operated independently with minimal interaction. Protecting Mad Lady from the start, allowing her to grow steadily with such a mindset, seemed implausible.

Could it be that I Know Someone had once overseen the treatment of Mad Lady's mental and psychological issues? After his demise, did Mad Lady's problems exacerbate? Lumian quickly formulated a plausible explanation, but considering Mad Lady's conduct on the betrothal ship, her current state struck him as abnormal.

On the betrothal ship, faced with the impending release of the sea's power in the energy passageway, Mad Lady, though eager and seeking excitement, had an escape route. As long as she didn't delay until the last moment, she could teleport away, avoiding the actual risk of death.

Now, whatever lurked in the depths of the tunnel made Lumian, despite his feigned high level, intuitively uneasy. He believed it represented an almost certain death sentence. Yet, Mad Lady persisted in her attempt to approach!

Could there be a reason compelling her to make contact with that object? Lumian wondered. He suspected that Mad Lady's actions might be part of the Celestial Worthy's scheme, convincing her that she could confront the provocation head-on and escape in time.

I can't let her and that Celestial Worthy succeed… Besides, personally, I look forward to ending her myself rather than witnessing her being swallowed by that dangerous object… Lumian's eyes narrowed, the desire to teleport forward and intercept Mad Lady compelling him.

However, preventing a Traveler from reaching a specific location in such a manner was clearly impossible. Lumian hesitated, unwilling to genuinely approach the flesh-and-blood "bird's nest" deep within the tunnel.

Suddenly, an idea struck him.

The peculiar structure's rejection of outsiders seems to have lifted, and with Lato Guiaro, a person possessing a potent sea bloodline, deceased. Could I attempt to gain temporary authority as the Governor of the Sea to halt Mad Lady's progress?

With that in mind, Lumian embarked on his endeavor.

Activating the power of the sea within him, he allowed his Astral Projection to merge and swiftly expand outward.

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Chapter 589 - 589 Object Within the Nest

589 Object Within the Nest

589 Object Within the Nest

As Lumian's Astral Projection expanded with the power of the sea, he immediately sensed the presence of the "waters."

This wasn't a genuine ocean but a fantastical sea created by radiant starlight. At its core lay the projection of the silver-gray behemoth.

Empowered by an ample supply of the sea's power, Lumian's Astral Projection surged forward, merging seamlessly with the phantom.

A burning sensation radiated from the left side of his chest, as if some form of acknowledgment had been received.

His consciousness extended boundlessly, taking command of the dreamlike illusory sea.

In the course of this process, he glimpsed the phantoms of Juan Oro, Ultraman Lato Guiaro, and unfamiliar apparitions.

Those who have returned to the sea? They seem to have transformed into water droplets in the sea… Lumian withdrew his gaze from the joyful Juan Oro and the pained Lato Guiaro, redirecting it toward the depths of the tunnel ahead. From a considerable distance, he spotted Mad Lady.

The silver-gray behemoth harbored entities nurtured within the flesh and blood "bird's nest." With the Batings Black Insect, Little Devils, and other extraterrestrial life forms, it was inevitable that they coexisted in the spirit world. However, this spirit world was entirely severed from the external realm. Consequently, Beyonders skilled in summoning creatures from the spirit world for assistance found themselves bereft of their primary reliance. Teleportation executed through the spirit world, however, retained some semblance of normalcy. Departing directly, however, proved impossible. The only avenues were through the energy passageway at the entrance or by breaching the outer wall to connect the inner and outer spirit worlds.

Simultaneously, the closer one approached the flesh-and-blood "bird's nest," the more peculiar the spirit world became. It was as though the air gradually thickened, becoming almost tangible and impeding the approach of "birds."

In such an environment, coupled with the absence of a flesh-and-blood “bird’s nest,” Mad Lady found herself unable to teleport directly. Her only recourse was to Blink incrementally, expending her spirituality with each maneuver.

Having focused on Mad Lady and the space in front of her, Lumian suddenly extended his right hand and clenched it into a fist.

The air surrounding Mad Lady immediately grew dense, as if assuming a tangible form. This transformation caused the illusory curtain to bend, compressing the corresponding area into a dark and transparent sphere.

Once more, Mad Lady’s form disappeared, but a formless force, shaped by the bending area, yanked her out and sent her plummeting.

Under the authority of the Governor of the Sea, the spirit world within the sphere and the spirit world within the silver-gray behemoth were forcibly separated!

However, this effect was contingent on the peculiar environment. In the external world, given Lumian’s current level and mastery of the power of the sea, completely isolating an area from the expansive and genuine spirit world proved challenging. He could merely employ Cosmic Void to create an exit path and a door symbolizing an escape route, a tactic vulnerable to counteraction by a Traveler’s abilities.

Mad Lady attempted another Blink, yet found herself unable to escape the dark sphere’s confines.

She halted in place, seriously contemplating her Recorded abilities and the items in her possession that might alleviate her current predicament.

Observing her struggle, Lumian couldn’t suppress his yearning for demigod-

level powers.

As the temporary authority-wielding Governor of the Sea—essentially a faux demigod incapable of withstanding a single spell from the “Cinderella” demigod—Lumian had ensnared Mad Lady in an inescapable dilemma. She proved challenging even for Mr. K to subdue in a brief timeframe.

Mad Lady gazed into the depths of the metal tunnel, representing the flesh and blood “bird’s nest,” her face aglow with unrestrained eagerness, anticipation, and excitement.

Confined within the dark sphere, she yearned for escape, dissatisfied with her inability to reach the desired destination.

Head over there, quick! Head over there, quick!

I want to go over!

The longing in her heart intensified, nearly manifesting as a tangible desire.

The desire surged into her chest, seeking to rupture the restraints and liberate her from this predicament.

Mr. K, having switched to a Traveler's soul, swiftly caught up and saw Mad Lady.

Instinctively, an illusory book materialized in his dark eyes.

Positioned in front of Mr. K, the book flipped through its pages while chanting in a low voice, "I came, I saw, I record."

In an instant, Mr. K underwent a transformation, manifesting as a two to three-meter-tall half-giant donned in cold black armor, brandishing a dark, straight broadsword.

Having Grazed a Traveler, he had selected three Beyonder powers: Blink, Record, and the Traveler's Door, encompassing teleportation or travel. Additionally, with Record, he had acquired an ability capable of influencing godhood from a Saint of the Aurora Order. While only half as effective as the original, it proved sufficient to contend with Mad Lady, who had yet to approach the threshold of godhood.

Mr. K advanced confidently, wielding the dark, straight broadsword, prepared to strike.

At that moment, Mad Lady's chest was overwhelmed by an intense surge of desire.

Then, she experienced a sharp, piercing pain.

She didn't need to lower her head. From the corner of her eye, she witnessed the flesh on her chest tearing apart inch by inch, the white bones snapping one by one. A grayish-white fog, mingled with fragments of flesh, surged forth, coalescing into a humanoid figure resembling her. In an instant, it leaped out of the dark "sphere" created by Lumian and darted into the depths of the metal tunnel.

Don't be in a hurry to leave! Unfazed by the situation, Mad Lady's face reflected excitement and a hint of regret.

Pfft!

Mr. K's dark broadsword cleaved through the dark sphere, diagonally bisecting Mad Lady.

Wearing the ring imbued with flesh and blood magic, Mad Lady didn't succumb immediately. Her two halves of flesh and blood writhed, attempting to reunite, but all endeavors were obliterated by the profound darkness left in the wake of the broadsword. The flesh and blood failed to reestablish a connection.

Come on, come on… Mad Lady's relatively intact head sought to aid her body, but she swiftly perceived the annihilation of her soul.

Her vision darkened, and her unevenly separated bodies crumpled to the ground.

Unperturbed by the fate of the April Fool's key member, Mr. K and Lumian redirected their focus to the grayish-white figure hurtling into the depths of the metal tunnel.

Comprising half fog and half flesh, the figure existed in a realm between reality and illusion.

The temporary Governor of the Sea, Lumian, once again honed in on the target and its surroundings, intending to marshal every ounce of sea power at his disposal.

At that moment, the grayish-white figure collapsed to the ground.

The flesh and blood originally belonging to Mad Lady seeped into the metal floor, and the grayish-white fog was on the verge of being absorbed.

Abruptly, the entire tunnel trembled. Lumian once again "saw" the pear-

shaped object fashioned from flesh and skin.

The flesh membrane on its surface buckled once more, outlining a disc-

shaped contour.

A formidable suction force erupted. Whether Lumian—the temporary Governor of the Sea—or Mr. K, they found themselves irresistibly propelled into the depths of the metal tunnel, as if an invisible hand seized them and drew them toward the core of the silver-gray behemoth.

Mad Lady's dismembered corpse and her belongings soared into the air, propelled towards the destination she had fervently yearned for in life.

The humanoid form outlined by the grayish-white fog seeped deeper into the metal floor, absorbing a portion.

In that moment, Lumian, wielding the temporary authority of the Governor of the Sea, employed his enhanced perception to "see" the flesh-and-blood "bird's nest" deep within the metal tunnel more distinctly than before.

The pear-shaped object's flesh and skin caved in, and the starlight and dark matter emanating from the surrounding flesh ropes accelerated their flow.

Through the taut skin and flesh, Lumian vaguely sensed the object nurtured within the pear-shaped structure.

It resembled a pitch-black vortex capable of devouring all colors and light. While not overly large, it featured a disc-shaped outer edge.

Wh… Lumian instinctively recalled scientific concepts and simplified scenes his sister Aurore had once explained. He identified a term that matched his observations: A black hole!

Did the Abraham family's ancestor seal a black hole with Amon? A black hole that has yet to fully form and is still nurtured within a mother's body from a mystical standpoint? Lumian found the idea absurd, straddling the line between scientific and mystical.

Simultaneously, he sensed a connection between the "black hole"-like object and another place. A profound, weighty, dense, and terrifying aura loomed over the world.

With a buzzing sensation, Lumian teetered on the brink of losing consciousness. Not only was his physical form being drawn towards the flesh and blood "bird's nest," but even his thoughts, Spirit Body, and destiny converged in that direction.

It was the same for Mr. K.

One after another, Mad Lady's fragmented remains and a few belongings floated between them.

Beyond the silver-gray behemoth, Franca and the others felt an ominous suction emanating from the seabed. It seemed as though a colossal vortex was forming, ready to engulf everything in its vicinity.

Splash!

The mountainous azure waves and jade-green seawater collapsed, filling the seabed.

Abruptly, resplendent starlight descended from the sky.

Madam Magician materialized, adorned in a deep-black Warlock robe embroidered with shimmering silver stars.

The wielder of a Major Arcana card extended her right hand toward the silver-gray behemoth at the seabed. Her figure appeared in a state of overlap, intermittently clear and blurry.

Each radiant starlight transformed into an illusory door, seamlessly "melding" with the suction force, merging into the silver-gray behemoth.

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Chapter 590 - 590 The Truth Behind the Seal

590 The Truth Behind the Seal

590 The Truth Behind the Seal

The surface of the massive silver-gray behemoth ignited with illusory doors, casting a star-like brilliance that darkened the sky above the sea.

This existing seal, triggered by Madam Magician, no longer resided in a nadir due to celestial shifts.

Starlight descended, swiftly repairing the temporary damage inflicted upon the seal.

Inside the behemoth, half of the grayish-white fog composing Mad Lady's human form was absorbed by the metal floor, appearing as if it would sink further.

In that crucial moment, starlight permeated the walls, floor, and ceiling, materializing resplendent doors of various shapes. These doors manipulated the void, thwarting the menacing suction and expelling the grayish-white fog.

Abruptly, Lumian felt the formidable suction force from the metal tunnel's depths dissipate.

He "saw" the dented flesh and blood "bird's nest" expanding again, releasing a copious amount of resplendent starlight.

The torrent surged through different parts of the silver-gray behemoth like a flood breaching a dam.

Lumian, Mr. K, Mad Lady's remains, and the items undulated with the sea's waves. As they were propelled forward, they encountered resistance and erosion from the sea's power.

Meanwhile, the fleshless, corporeal grayish-white phantom swayed in the vast starlight, growing fainter before gradually dissipating.

Unlike previous instances, the sea's power did not erupt from the ocean depths this time. Madam Magician had severed the energy passageway, successfully resealing and reinforcing the seal.

Madam Magician, her form seemingly illusory, raised her right hand and pointed at the betrothal ship and sailboat, her eyes mirroring the corresponding scene.

The two ships, along with Hela, Franca, the "Cinderella" demigod, the humanoid Sealed Artifact, the Maidens of the Sea, the remaining deputy hosts, and the sailors, vanished from the underwater cavity, instantly reappearing on the sunny, calm, turquoise sea beyond the seal.

Crash! Mountain-like azure waves and jade-green seawater resembling well walls slammed down, filling the underwater cavity.

Madam Magician's gaze then shifted to Lumian, Mr. K, Mad Lady's corpse, Pride Armor, and other items.

Just as she was about to relocate them, Lumian, still donning the Flog boxing gloves, suddenly felt a heavy, dense, terrifying, and brilliant aura "looking" at him from another place connected to the black hole in the flesh and blood "bird's nest."

Crack, crack. Lumian heard his bones shattering, his skull caving in, ribs snapping, and flesh compressing layer by layer.

After unleashing the Ascetic's accumulated strength, he, now taller, was instantly compressed into a short, thin, and dense form.

Intense pain flooded his mind, and his brain began to passively contract.

After a moment, Lumian broke free from the gaze and floated into the gradually calming air.

Before Madam Magician, an illusory book rapidly flipped, emitting a faint glow full of vitality. It bathed Lumian's body in light, reconstructing his broken bones and swiftly enlarging his compressed flesh, rescuing him from his near-death state.

Then, Madam Magician tossed Mad Lady's rose-gold ring embedded with the crimson gem to Lumian, allowing him to reassemble his flesh and blood and return to his original appearance. He was no longer a short, thin, and heavy peculiar human.

Simultaneously, in Port Santa, Loki's figure faded as he entered the spirit world, preparing to teleport away.

However, a dark, formless barrier appeared in front of him, blocking his path.

Loki's pupils dilated as he realized that at some point, he had been ensnared in a dark and transparent "sphere," seemingly bent from the void, with "walls" everywhere, and a hidden door.

High up in the spirit world—near the seven pure lights—Madam Magician hovered, adorned in a deep-black Warlock robe adorned with stars.

Loki's presence registered in her eyes, and an illusory book rapidly flipped before her.

She had strategically waited until the last moment to prevent Loki from receiving the Celestial Worthy's warning, providing her an opportunity to capture him alive.

Loki's lips curled into an exaggerated smile upon understanding the situation.

Rumble!

His body erupted from the inside out, as if a self-controlled bomb had been embedded in his flesh beforehand.

Loki's bizarre suicide succeeded; flesh and blood splattered, and his aura dissipated.

Madam Magician promptly lifted the seal on the area, capturing the information Loki had imprinted in the spirit world.

The spirit world served as a repository for all information. Divination often entailed revelations from the spirit world, and the matter of resurrection inevitably left corresponding information.

As long as she found relevant information in time, Madam Magician could trace Loki to his resurrection spot and pinpoint the ancient castle documented in the Secret Order records.

Soon, Madam Magician obtained something.

Her figure vanished from the spirit world's heights, navigating the endless darkness adorned with symbols.

In the next moment, a vast grayish-white fog materialized before her eyes.

Magician halted, gazing at the seemingly endless expanse of grayish-white fog.

…

Under the silent, dusky sky, above the calm blue sea.

Using Mad Lady's ring embedded with a crimson gem, Lumian adjusted his internal organs, flesh, and bones to their original state.

Treading on the corporeal wind, Lumian removed the ring that enabled the use of flesh and blood magic and anxiously inquired of Madam Magician, "How's the situation on the other two fronts?"

As he spoke, he sensed a mystical and indiscernible flicker from Madam Magician.

Magician smiled.

“Loki has just been killed by me, but I couldn’t prevent his resurrection or seize the opportunity to locate his ancient castle.

“Bard has been captured by Gandalf, whom you intentionally sent to Milo Village. He’s alive.”

Phew… Lumian instinctively heaved a sigh of relief.

Though he hadn’t captured Loki, wasting one more of Loki’s resurrections meant he had achieved his objectives.

Furthermore, Ultraman and Mad Lady had been completely eliminated, and Bard had been captured alive. The results were satisfactory.

Initially, Lumian hadn’t confirmed Bard’s identity. He didn’t even know if Bard had participated in the sea prayer ritual. However, he had a few suspects, including the fake Governor of the Sea and Juan Oro’s grandson, Fernandez. Since most of the suspects were in Milo Village, he had Gandalf closely monitor them.

Madam Magician continued, “I relocated everyone else from these waters. I sent Mr. K of the Aurora Order back to his rented room in Port Santa. Mad Lady’s corpse and items are floating here.”

The Major Arcana card holder opened her palm, shrouded in darkness, forming a small box. Inside, Mad Lady’s dismembered corpse and other items had “shrunk” to the size of mosquitoes, drifting as if in another world.

Lumian was taken aback. He looked at the bottom of the azure sea and asked, “Is it over?”

He had anticipated gaining control over the silver-gray behemoth eventually.

“Otherwise? Back then, even two Kings of Angels couldn’t clean up the mess. How is our Tarot Club going to handle it—unless Mr. Fool awakens,” Madam Magician replied in an amused tone.

Lumian recollected the items in the flesh and blood “bird’s nest” and nodded in agreement.

He asked in confusion, “Is it true that sealed at the bottom is a black hole? Uh… Do you know what a black hole is?”

“I do,” Madam Magician chuckled. “And I also know that the silver-gray thing down there is a spaceship.”

Spaceship… Lumian was taken aback.

Upon reflection, he realized that the silver-gray behemoth bore a striking resemblance to the spaceship described in his sister's bedtime stories!

Madam Magician not only knew about spaceships but also grasped the concept of a black hole!

Never underestimate high-ranking individuals. The time-transcending knowledge possessed by transmigrators might not be foreign to them… Lumian sighed with emotion.

At that moment, he noticed that Madam Magician's mystical flickering had vanished.

The Major Arcana card holder gazed at the seabed and explained, "It's a black hole, ready to form, personally created by an evil god. Constantly absorbing surrounding matter and energy, it strengthens itself, eventually becoming a true black hole.

"In the Fourth Epoch, the evil god seized an opportunity to send the embryonic black hole through the spaceship at the bottom of the sea. The plan was for it to rapidly develop, tear apart, and devour our planet, causing the barrier to lose support and disintegrate prematurely. True gods and angels could escape, but without the barrier's protection, who knows what would happen.

"Fortunately, Mr. Door and Amon discovered the threat in time and took action. Yet, They couldn't obliterate the already developing black hole. Any attempts to destroy or destabilize it would only make it stronger. The only viable solution was to seal it and patiently wait for it to weaken through repeated radiations until it ultimately evaporates.

"Alternatively, they could transport it and the spaceship into the cosmos, abandoning it in desolate areas. However, this would require Mr. Door to leave the safety of the barrier and shadow the threat continuously to prevent accidents. Moreover, it remained under the vigilant gaze of that entity, which periodically replenished its energy through their connection. The danger was evident."

That explains it… Lumian finally grasped why it had been sealed rather than destroyed.

Intrigued, he echoed a term, "Mr. Door?"

It bore a striking resemblance to Mr. Fool.

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Chapter 591 - 591 Information Gap

591 Information Gap

591 Information Gap

Upon hearing Lumian's inquiry, Madam Magician's tone carried a subtle emotion.

"Mr. Door is the ancestor of the Abraham family, the top duke among the five great nobles of the Tudor Empire. It was He who sealed this spaceship. Amon, on the other hand, designed the ritual that regularly siphoned power from the black hole to alleviate the pressure caused by the natural decay of the seal and hasten the black hole's demise."

Higher in rank than Amon… In the Tudor Empire, Mr. Door was second only to the Blood Emperor? He listened intently.

Madam Magician sighed softly at that moment.

"In a way, Mr. Door can be considered my mentor."

A mentor? Your mentor is a Fourth Epoch King of Angels and the top noble in the Tudor Empire? A figure from almost two thousand years ago… Lumian hadn't anticipated Madam Magician having such a profound background.

No wonder she earned the position of the Angel of Stars beside Mr. Fool's throne. No wonder she held a Major Arcana card in the Tarot Club!

Madam Magician glanced at Lumian, teasingly adding, "It's true that Mr. Door guided and 'supervised' me in advancing along the divine path, but the method wasn't as virtuous as you might imagine. It was far from good."

Far from good… Lumian was surprised before connecting the dots.

Combining his experiences, he made a guess.

Madam Magician had once fallen under the corruptive influence of Mr. Door but received assistance from Mr. Fool. Did she join the Tarot Club because of this?

However, from Madam Magician's words, it seems she reconciled with Mr. Door? Otherwise, she wouldn't refer to Him as her mentor. How intriguing and surreal. Just like how I might say in the future that the Angel of Inevitability, Termiboros, was my mentor, Lumian mused inwardly and probed, "Is Mr. Door still active?"

Is He as lively as His peer, Amon?

Madam Magician shook her head.

“He has perished.”

I see… Lumian cast his gaze toward the deep, bottomless sea.

“April Fool’s objective is to acquire that spaceship? But it seems they are unaware of the nascent black hole sealed inside…”

It was a formidable entity that not even a true god could completely neutralize. Once released from its seal and allowed to develop, it would compress and absorb everything in its vicinity. Why did the key members of April Fool’s, who weren’t even at the demigod level, believe they could confront it without fear?

Relying on the spaceship to contain it? That seemed improbable. Only the evil god who created the black hole or an entity at Mr. Fool’s level could control it…

Mad Lady even believed that within the seal was an incubating deity or monster of a comparable magnitude…

With these thoughts in mind, Lumian’s heart stirred as he inquired in a deep voice, “Were the key members of April Fool’s misled? Is the Celestial Worthy’s objective to unleash the black hole and trigger an apocalyptic catastrophe ahead of schedule?

“As long as Beyonders corrupted by Him enter the spaceship, He stands a chance of achieving His goal?”

He really doesn’t seem to value the lives of Ultraman, Mad Lady, Bard, and Loki…

However, that is also typical of April Fool’s modus operandi. They don’t take lives other than their own seriously!

Lumian suddenly felt like laughing. His satisfaction from finishing off Ultraman and Mad Lady intensified.

Madam Magician nodded thoughtfully and remarked, “If you hadn’t used all your resources and handled this matter with absolute strength, or if I had arrived ten to twenty seconds later and the grayish-white fog from Mad Lady’s body had fully permeated the spaceship, the outcome might have been entirely different. We wouldn’t be able to be here and discuss this matter so calmly.”

Lumian reflected on the events that had transpired and muttered thoughtfully to himself, “If I hadn’t gained temporary authority as the Governor of the Sea and restricted Mad Lady’s teleportation, she might have approached the flesh-and-blood ‘bird’s nest’ incubating the black hole before your arrival. She wouldn’t have manifested a humanoid form made of grayish-white fog to infiltrate the spacecraft. If that had occurred, the situation might have been even more challenging to handle…”

The reason he obtained temporary authority as the Governor of the Sea was because he utilized Lie to pilfer a portion of the sea's power. This allowed him to resonate with the sea and possess a counterfeit yet highly elevated status.

The ability to use Lie to steal a portion of the sea's power was granted by the Seer pathway's mystical item, which had been imbued with a high-level power of Steal when placed on the ancestor-honoring altar in Milo Village.

The altar could bestow high-level Steal powers on items because it was constructed by Amon… Constructed by Amon…

Lumian's thoughts suddenly cleared up. He grasped that it wasn't just him and the others sabotaging April Fool's; there were also influential figures in the shadows who didn't want the Celestial Worthy to succeed!

Madam Magician chuckled.

"Have you figured it out? I recognized what was happening when I saw Lie, now endowed with the power of Steal.

"Some time ago, I spied on the altar beneath Milo Village and confirmed its purpose—to gather the spirituality of worshippers and accumulate enough power to trigger the bestowment of the Steal ability. Given Milo Village's population and the number of individuals with the sea bloodline, it can only be bestowed once a year. It can't last more than half a month each time, and it can only be used once or twice.

"Lie's enhanced power far surpasses that."

Lumian furrowed his brow and asked, "Are you suggesting that the 'Steal' on Lie was directly granted by Amon?"

This hypothesis struck him as absurd, comical, and surreal.

In the past few months, Amon had been a source of terror, causing him mental distress. He nearly perished in the Samaritan Women's Spring. Subsequently, he informed the Tarot Club and aided the Angel of Time in eliminating most of the Amons in Trier. He also wrested a substantial debt from Amon's parasitic form.

Their relationship? It was one of deep-seated enmity! The sentiment was likely mutual.

Yet now, he was being told that Amon had covertly assisted him?

While Lumian understood that Amon's aid wasn't driven by benevolence but rather to thwart the Celestial Worthy's objectives, he couldn't shake the feeling that the world had taken a bizarre turn.

Madam Magician chuckled and explained, "Perhaps, back then, there was an Amon residing within the altar.

“Truth be told, I didn’t anticipate that those who once instilled awe, fear, and vigilance in our discussions would occasionally collaborate with us. Of course, don’t become complacent. While we may be teammates when facing the evil gods beyond the barrier, that doesn’t extend to all matters. Even when dealing with the evil god’s followers, it depends on the specific circumstances. They might believe they can handle it alone and use the opportunity to set a trap that could harm you.”

“Alright…” Lumian resisted belief, but he had no choice but to acknowledge the reality before him. The truth was laid bare.

Having been briefed, Lumian mentally reconstructed the sea prayer ritual, refining the spiderweb-like thought pattern without any critical deficiencies.

The corresponding experiences and lessons surfaced in Lumian’s mind:

April Fool’s biggest failure was not knowing that Franca and I are also members of the Tarot Club, apart from being part of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. Moreover, the Tarot Club places great importance on matters related to the Celestial Worthy…

There’s also an information gap between them and the Celestial Worthy, leading to their downfall…

Have they not considered that their goals might not align with the Celestial Worthy’s?

Despite me lacking information as well, I wasn’t careless. I didn’t underestimate any visible or hidden enemies. Even a lion uses its full strength to hunt a rabbit…

Of course, the crucial aspect is that those holding key information and concealing it are on my side in this operation. What if they become my enemies next time? How should I deal with them…

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian sensed that his digestion of the Conspirer potion had significantly advanced, thanks to the successful hunt and the questions he had formulated. Seizing this opportunity, he summarized his third acting principle: “One of the keys to a conspiracy is information. A good Conspirer must be adept at exploiting information gaps and even take the initiative to create information gaps.”

Closing his eyes to assess his body’s condition, Lumian felt that another major, successful conspiracy and a period of daily accumulation should allow him to completely digest the Conspirer potion.

And that major conspiracy could be combined with the ritual to advance to Sequence 5 Reaper. No further planning was needed.

The Reaper ritual required a conspiracy to capture a target whose Sequence was higher than his—alive.

When Lumian opened his eyes, Madam Magician transmitted the darkness in her palm to him.

“You’ll be in charge of distributing these items. This is something a Hunter needs to learn and do well to advance to a demigod.”

“Alright.” Lumian was accustomed to distributing spoils of war.

He then added, “But before that, I’d like to meet Bard.”

That, too, was a spoil of war.

…

In the ancient and dilapidated palace in the Nation of the Evernight, Lumian, Franca, Hela, and Gandalf materialized one after another.

They were adorned in their usual attire for Gatherings, with Lumian now assuming the guise of Muggle Aurore.

Gandalf unceremoniously tossed Bard to the ground, not bothering to restrain him.

Bard surveyed the familiar surroundings, devoid of any notions of escape or resistance.

This was the concealed Nation of the Evernight, isolated from the outside world. How could he possibly flee?

And against two demigods, how could he even attempt resistance?

Bard swallowed hard and spoke preemptively, “I was also bewitched by Loki!”

All he could hope for now was that, leveraging his Sequence experience as a Swindler, he could successfully “convince” the two demigods.

Noticing the silence from Hela and Gandalf, Bard added, “I can lead you to Loki’s ancient castle. I know a clue, really!”

At that moment, Lumian Lee, masquerading as Muggle, spoke in a deep voice, “Just kill him and channel his spirit.”

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Chapter 592 - 592 Bluff

592 Bluff

Kill him and channel his spirit?

Bard stared at Lumian Lee, masquerading as a Muggle, a chill running down his spine as his hair stood on end.

He sensed the unmistakable killing intent emanating from Lumian, causing fear to grip him.

However, a suspicion lingered in Bard's mind; he believed Lumian was trying to manipulate him, deliberately showcasing his anger and hatred to break his psychological defenses.

His suspicion arose because spirit channeling wasn't the optimal solution.

Celestial Worthy possessed a higher level than many evil gods, and the corruption of those evil gods could lead to a failed spirit channeling, what's more someone with the Celestial Worthy's bestowment.

Recognizing this, Bard's heart settled.

As a Swindler, he maintained a terrified expression, stepping back two paces as he looked at Lumian.

"I'll spill it all, no lies. You can verify it! Don't kill me!"

Lumian approached him step by step, brandishing a dagger.

Bard turned to Hela, Gandalf, and Franca, pleading in a "panicked" tone,

"He's lost his mind, and you're just going to let him be? Spirit channeling isn't all-powerful!"

Bard deliberately used "him" as a pronoun, signaling that he knew Lumian wasn't Muggle, as if urging them not to play along.

In two steps, Lumian arrived in front of Bard, casting his gaze at the April Fool's key member, who couldn't temporarily change his appearance back. He raised the dagger in his hand.

Bard sneered inwardly, growing more convinced that Lumian Lee wouldn't actually end his life for spirit channeling—at least not yet.

If his current actions weren't an act, Gandalf and Hela would have intervened no matter what. They wouldn't just stand by!

Bard strained his throat and shouted, as if terrorized, "I'll genuinely cooperate with you! I'll assist you in locating Loki and his ancient castle! See, I didn't even use my powers to resist in such a situation!"

As Bard shouted, he fixed his gaze on Lumian and the dagger's tip, attempting to convey evasion and pleading through his eyes. The former conveyed fear, and the latter was a plea for mercy.

Throughout this process, Bard's heart was filled with mockery, almost void of panic.

Trying to deceive a Swindler?

What a ludicrous notion!

I bet you'll stop after I count to five!

Five, four, three…

Pfft!

Bard's vision suddenly turned blood-red as the dagger thrust into his left eye, piercing through the gap in the eye socket and into his brain.

Impossible!

Absolutely impossible!

Is he truly going to kill me?

Intense pain overwhelmed Bard's mind, prompting him to instinctively raise his right hand and press it against his face. He fought in the opposite direction, striving to put some distance between himself and the dagger, the source of the agonizing damage.

Lumian reached out with his left hand, pinning Bard in place and making his struggles futile.

Then, Lumian leaned forward slightly and whispered into the ear of the April Fool's key member.

Bard glimpsed Muggle's beautiful face, her rosy lips moving as she whispered

—a whisper filled with satisfaction and mockery, "My godson has gnawed on half of Loki's arm and knows a lot about him. I believe that knowledge surpasses yours…"

Surpasses mine… If I had known earlier, I would have utilized my powers… Even in the midst of pain and struggle, Bard was momentarily stunned, feeling frustration, despair, and embarrassment.

Soon, these emotions dissipated. Lumian gripped the dagger embedded in Bard's eye socket and twisted it a few times, crushing the frontal lobe.

Observing Bard, who had now calmed down, Lumian nodded in satisfaction. He withdrew his dagger and earnestly assisted the other party in stemming the bleeding and bandaging the wound, though he skipped the disinfectant.

Only then did Franca approach and click her tongue.

"I thought you were just scaring him."

That's why she didn't intervene. She had watched as Lumian advanced toward Bard, dagger in hand, witnessing Bard's pleas for mercy.

She believed Hela and Gandalf had similar expectations.

When the dagger pierced Bard's eye socket, Franca was taken aback. It was only then that she realized Lumian was serious!

No, Lumian didn't truly intend to kill Bard. Instead, he planned to employ the April Fool's created prank to deal with him, recreating the original state of I Know Someone.

Without waiting for Lumian's response, Franca asked curiously, "When did you master lobotomy?"

Lumian wiped the blood off the dagger with a white strap and smirked mockingly.

"I learned it from watching the doctor perform surgery on I Know Someone.

"It's such a simple procedure. As a Beyonder skilled in action, if I can't memorize and imitate it after watching it once, it only proves that my brain has been corrupted by the potion."

Impersonating Muggle, Lumian deliberately spoke in his sister's voice, as if she were still alive.

Franca looked at Aurore's face under the hood and listened to her voice. She wasn't angered by the mockery. She only muttered, "The surgery isn't just about inserting and stirring a few times. There are still many key points before and after the procedure. Even during the surgery, if you insert it just a bit deeper, the outcome will be entirely different."

"So be it. If he really dies, we'll commence the spirit channeling." Lumian casually poured the remaining truth serum into the mouth of the stunned Bard, who offered no resistance.

After completing this task, he added, “Madam Hela mentioned that this place can minimize the influence of evil gods.”

“It’s only minimal, not zero. Besides, what if the problem lies in his spirit, and he self-destructs?” Franca instinctively retorted. This was why Hela hadn’t directly pulled Bard into a dream to extract his true answers. After all, the dream might present scenes that shouldn’t be seen. This was even more dangerous than simple verbal descriptions.

Only then did Gandalf, draped in a linen robe and a hood, sigh softly.

He couldn’t bear to witness Bard’s suffering, but he didn’t discourage the actions taken. He wasn’t the one who had been harmed by April Fool’s. He wasn’t in a position to criticize the victim’s family for their extreme actions.

Before this operation, Hela had briefed Gandalf on Muggle’s demise and Lumian Lee’s role. The president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society sympathized with the siblings’ plight, but he also blamed himself. He believed that the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society had been unrestrained. As president, he bore a heavy responsibility.

After a moment, Bard, who had undergone a “requiem” and gradually recovered from his pain, started addressing the queries of the people present.

The first to inquire was Gandalf. He peered down at the Dream Stealer and asked, “How did you come to believe in that Celestial Worthy?”

Gandalf and Hela had already gathered intel on Celestial Worthy from Franca and Lumian, and they deemed it crucial.

Bard responded calmly, “From the beginning. I used to be a cultural relic thief and acquired a batch of ancient items. While studying their history to ascertain their value, I deciphered the meaning of some inscriptions…”

Abruptly, Hela cut Bard’s narration short and said coldly,

“You don’t have to explain the full meaning. Just mention a few keywords.”

Bard had no intention of arguing. He remained as docile as a sheep.

“Keywords include: Deception, Fooling, Door of All Doors, Lord of Mysteries…

As Bard finished speaking, the ancient palace they were in suddenly became misty and unclear.

Simultaneously, Lumian’s left chest burned again.

In the next moment, the night sky outside the palace darkened even more, and all the mist vanished.

“Why did I feel like worms were growing in me just now?” Franca felt a lingering fear.

Merely a few names, incomplete honorific names, made her inexplicably uneasy. Every inch of her flesh seemed to come alive, about to transform into worms crawling out of her skin.

One of Bard’s initial plans was to answer Lumian and company’s questions dishonestly and without reservation. Then, he would take the initiative to reveal all the details regarding Celestial Worthy. He wanted to see if he could secretly corrupt his enemies and shake the Nation of the Evernight’s concealments to create a “door” to escape.

“If I could really use this to corrupt Gandalf and Hela, why would they kill me when we’re all Celestial Worthy believers? We would definitely work together to deal with Lumian Lee!”

Of course, Bard no longer harbored such thoughts. He had obtained an inevitable peace.

“Descriptions of high-level existences often indicate danger. In this world, ignorance might not be a bad thing.” Gandalf sighed and assessed what had just happened.

He then inquired about the follow-up.

Bard’s expression remained unchanged as he said, “After deciphering the words, I lost consciousness. When I woke up, I had already transmigrated to this world.

“After adapting to my new body, I instinctively recalled my previous encounters and the words I had deciphered. Then, I saw a thin gray fog emanating from my surroundings and received a revelation from the Celestial Worthy.

“In other words, you believed in that Celestial Worthy as soon as you transmigrated, before the establishment of the Research Society?” Gandalf probed further.

“Yes.” Bard’s emotions lacked any fluctuations. “Back then, I thought that if I didn’t choose to submit, believe in Him, or follow Him, I might die on the spot. When that happened, I might not have a chance to transmigrate and revive. Later, I gradually realized His greatness. He could even fool the Nation of the Evernight and prevent our problems from being discovered.”

Gandalf pondered for a moment and asked, “How did Loki come to believe in that Celestial Worthy?”

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Chapter 593 - 593 Fooled

593 Fooled

In response to Gandalf's question, Bard recounted the past with a directness that left little room for ambiguity.

"I don't know. He didn't tell me. After the founding of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, I began to notice the guy's actions and demeanor mirroring the influence of the Celestial Worthy. Likewise, he saw the same in me, prompting a mutual inquiry. Eventually, we confirmed each other's intentions, and assembled an April Fool's team."

Gandalf and Hela probed about the Celestial Worthy, but with no breakthroughs, Lumian, disguised as a Muggle, shifted his gaze to Bard and asked, "What was your crew's aim in disrupting the sea prayer ritual?"

"To control the underwater spaceship. It's our ticket to traversing the cosmos and holding our ground against Angels to some extent…" Bard revealed April Fool's plan.

Lumian's lips curved upward.

"Do you know what's sealed in the depths of that spaceship?"

At this revelation, Franca suddenly grasped the core issue.

Spaceship?

The thing at the bottom of Port Santa is a spaceship?

Isn't this too sci-fi and not mystical enough?

Does this world have everything?

To expedite the interrogation of Bard, a key member of April Fool's, Lumian and Franca had entered the Nation of the Evernight without much communication.

"Spaceship…" Gandalf echoed the term, his tone brimming with unmistakable yearning.

Hela maintained a silence akin to the depths of night.

Bard responded to Lumian's inquiry, "According to our interpretation of the language and the insights from the Celestial Worthy, that spacecraft functions as

both a petri dish and an incubation chamber. It's nurturing a high-level creature. Control the spaceship, and you control it. Without that control, the spacecraft alone won't stand a chance against an Angel."

The smile of "Aurore" became even more alluring.

"Ever wondered why the ancient Angel who sealed the spaceship didn't take control of it? Why didn't They command the high-level creature or destroy it outright?"

Bard fell silent momentarily before articulating, "It might take a considerable time for the high-level creature to mature. Taking control of the spaceship would halt everything. Patience is required until the recent few years—just before the creature is due—before it can be managed."

Lumian's smile beneath the hood grew brighter.

"If that's the case, the ancient Angel who sealed the high-level creature will definitely reappear. Did you have the confidence to resist an Angel and win the spaceship? Or do you believe the Angel either didn't try to decipher or couldn't decipher the true meaning of those commands?"

"It's been so many years—They might have already perished…" Bard paused.

In his dream, a creature on the altar, potentially the avatar of an ancient Angel, hinted that the Angel might still be observing Milo Village and those waters.

"Why didn't we think to confirm it before embarking on the entire plan…" Bard voiced his doubts, his emotions showing no apparent shifts.

Lumian replied with a smile, "I can tell you that the spaceship isn't sealed with a high-level creature. It's an incomplete, nascent black hole. Once unsealed and piloted away, it will absorb the mystical body housing it, suck you guys in, and completely take shape, tearing apart and devouring the current world.

"Back then, the ancient Angels didn't attempt to control it because it was dangerous, idiot!"

Bard was once again taken aback, as if he had never considered such a possibility.

After a moment, he hesitated and said, "We… might have… been fooled…"

Though Bard's emotions remained unchanging, the blood-colored liquid that trickled from the simple bandage down the bridge of his nose painted a tragic and mournful picture.

Lumian burst into laughter, his back bending slightly.

"Do you only now realize that you've all been fooled by that Celestial Worthy? He provided revelations to mislead you. Through your deaths, He could open the seal and destroy this world to achieve His goals!

“Haha, April Fool’s, indeed an organization of fools!”

Bard fell into silence once more, then candidly expressed his thoughts.

“We’re fools, truly fools…”

Meanwhile, Gandalf and the others had varied reactions.

Dammit, a black hole? Destroy this world? Franca had thought the news of a spaceship was explosive enough, but she hadn’t expected something even more terrifying to follow.

And an entity creating a black hole?

Franca, lacking direct understanding of top-level powers, realized the magnitude of such a great existence.

Previously, she felt she had a sufficient understanding of the world. Now, she admitted frankly, I’m still a f*cking elementary school student!

Gandalf took a deep breath and said, “If I become a god, it would be so convenient for me to conduct research… Black holes…”

Hela retrieved a metal flask from her black widow clothes and took a sip, her thoughts inscrutable.

Lumian’s laughter echoed for a moment, providing a brief respite. However, underlying pain still gripped his heart, resonating in the shadows within. It couldn’t be eradicated or dismissed.

In the presence of the key members of April Fool’s, memories of his sister Aurore’s tragic fate couldn’t be ignored.

Bard stood there, a silent reminder of a fact deliberately overlooked.

Hence, Lumian couldn’t help but utter, “kill him and channel his spirit,” resorting to action in a half-truth manner.

Looking at Bard, Lumian inquired, “Do you know if Ultraman and Mad Lady have been to Cordu?”

“Yes,” replied Bard. “Part of our original plan was to find Nolfi’s child, the sea maid. She lived in Intis’s Riston Province. A stopover at Cordu was intended to confirm Muggle’s situation and the final outcome of the prank.”

At the mention of “prank,” a vein on Lumian’s forehead throbbed.

“How could you be so sure that Muggle was already dead?”

Hearing Lumian, disguised as a Muggle, pose this question, Gandalf let out another inaudible sigh. Franca sighed inwardly.

Bard shook his head.

“I’m unsure. Mad Lady and Ultraman went. They informed me the village was wiped out. No chance for anyone to make it out alive. They might have even employed divination, spirit channeling, and such to be sure.”

“Impossible for anyone to survive?” Lumian smiled. “Am I not human?”

Bard glanced at him and spoke his mind.

“You might not even pass as human anymore.”

That’s not wrong. I’m now a humanoid Sealed Artifact with self-awareness and fate… Lumian made a self-deprecating remark before adding, “The number of survivors is greater than you can imagine. A certain madame, her husband, butler, and maidservant had fled.”

Without giving Bard a chance to respond, Lumian inquired further,

“What was Loki trying to achieve with the Muggle incident?”

“I wasn’t deeply involved. Just tossed in a few ideas; not much in the loop,” Bard admitted honestly. “Ultraman might have a clue. He and Loki teamed up in other ventures.”

“In what ventures?” Lumian persisted.

Bard shook his head slowly.

“Not entirely sure about the specifics. It’s tied to the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.”

Connected to the Eternal Blazing Sun Church? Ultraman, a Sequence 5 Priest of Light on the Sun pathway… The humanoid Sealed Artifact lost by the church on the betrothal ship… Lumian’s instincts kicked in.

“Any key April Fool’s members that are not transmigrators?”

They had previously misconstrued April Fool’s as a gang of degenerated transmigrators. Yet, as an organization, it naturally expanded.

After all these years, April Fool’s likely harbored more key members!

Bard nodded.

“Yes.”

As expected… Lumian shot a glance at Franca, garbed in Assassin attire, seeking confirmation from Bard.

“One of them is a Purifier from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, and he holds a decent status?”

“Yes,” Bard confirmed again. “Thanks to him, we got wind of a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact we could utilize when we altered our plan. He even assisted in its escape from the seal.”

“And who might this person be?” Franca inquired, stepping in for the absent 007.

“It’s a one-way line to Loki,” Bard indicated, revealing his lack of knowledge about the member’s true identity.

Franca chuckled, saying, “If the Eternal Blazing Sun Church launches an inquiry, they might stumble upon some leads.”

Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts weren’t just lying around. They couldn’t be pilfered casually!

Lumian, noting Gandalf and Hela had no more queries, turned to Bard.

“What intel do you have on Loki’s ancient castle?”

“It goes by the name Dylan—a charming name,” Bard began. “Loki once told me it’s a concealed ancient castle. Impossible to discover or see under normal circumstances. In simpler terms, you can’t pinpoint its location through appearance or history.

“I’ve always envied Loki inheriting such a treasure after transmigration—an ancient castle. Later, he relied on the Celestial Worthy’s revelation and the corresponding boon to succeed. I once tried to swindle Castle Dylan for myself, but I failed.”

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Chapter 594 - 594 Execution

594 Execution

Franca almost chuckled in exasperation at Bard's remark.

April Fool's not only deceived outsiders but also themselves. If they didn't believe in Celestial Worthy, cooperation wouldn't be on the table.

Bard delved into his knowledge about Castle Dylan.

"That ancient castle used to be the domain of a secret organization known as the Secret Order. Loki became a member of the organization when he transmigrated. The story goes that the initial leader of the Secret Order personally constructed the ancient castle and concealed it over a century ago."

Curious, Franca inquired, "Who's leading the Secret Order now?"

Bard shook his head slowly.

"Loki is in the dark about that too. Only those who've become Bizarro Sorcerers or Sequence 4 demigods within the Secret Order can meet the leader and establish a connection with him. Others merely follow the orders of their direct superiors.

"Loki once contemplated murdering his mentor, his immediate superior in the Secret Order, to gain the Bizarro Sorcerer Beyonder characteristic and stage a grand performance. Yet, due to his comprehension and fear of Bizarro Sorcerers, he never solidified this idea into a concrete plan. Eventually, he gathered all the Bizarro Sorcerer potion ingredients in Castle Dylan and entirely abandoned his initial scheme.

"Do you think a hidden place like Castle Dylan, with its long history, would be quiet, cold, and sinister? Contrary to expectations, Loki informed me that it's quite lively, featuring a grand performance every day."

A grand performance… Hela recalled the pitch-black ancient castle she had glimpsed in Loki's dream, along with the wax-statue-like guests inside.

Deep in thought, Lumian asked Bard, "How do you suggest we locate Castle Dylan?"

"I'm still missing crucial clues," Bard admitted sincerely. "If finding Castle Dylan were that straightforward, the current leader of the Secret Order would have seized it and ousted Loki. No, he would've turned Loki into his puppet."

Lumian intended to inquire more thoroughly with Ludwig later, seeking any information he might have gained after consuming half of Loki's arm.

"What about Hisoka? What insights do you have on Hisoka?" Lumian inquired.

Bard seemed to recollect something.

"That guy doesn't quite fit in. He prefers going solo. The rare instances of collaboration are mostly with Mad Lady.

"We all sense his emotions are pretty unpredictable, swinging between joy and anger. Mad Lady, however, remarked that he's not pure enough.

"He's highly dangerous—on par with Loki. His specific path remains a mystery. I've witnessed him using his abilities twice, both times involving mystical items. It's a poker card that can change its face, showcasing the attributes of Frost and Cut respectively. Word has it that Hisoka sought out an Artisan outside the Research Society to customize it after hunting a Beyonder."

Regrettably, Mad Lady is dead, and there's no means to commune with her spirit. She undoubtedly held more information about Hisoka… Does not being pure enough mean that Hisoka isn't as unhinged as he appears? Is his occasional madness a deliberate facade? Lumian pondered with a twinge of regret.

Even though Lumian had obtained Mad Lady's remains, her spirit had been severely corrupted by Celestial Worthy. Some of it had even been "washed away" by the power of the sea, completely obliterated.

Lumian sighed quietly and shifted the conversation to a different topic.

"Do you have insights into the sea's power on Ultraman?"

"Indeed." Bard shared his findings candidly. "I played a role in deciphering the extraterrestrial language, although the Celestial Worthy provided crucial revelations. Additionally, the power of the sea is not exclusive to the offspring of Port Santa. I once encountered two heretics in Lenburg with similar abilities, and I managed to extract corresponding knowledge from them.

"This information greatly aided my decryption efforts, revealing that this pathway is not solely tied to the sea. In fact, only a small portion of it involves the sea.

"The power primarily emanates from the stars and the land beneath our feet. As you all are aware, our world is, after all, a planet.

"The corresponding Sequence 9 is known as Astronomy Aficionado. It focuses on acquiring knowledge of the cosmos, related information, an initial perception of reality, and enhancing one's physique.

"Sequence 8, named Star Worshiper, can decipher the Star Language or the Language of the Stars and receive insights into fate.

“Sequence 7, called Star Sacrificer, gains true powers through sacrificial rituals involving the stars. This encompasses Gravity Abnormality, Weakening Ray, Electromagnetic Attraction, and Cosmic Void.

“Sequence 6 is Navigator. They possess a deeper understanding of space and dimensions, allowing them to locate hidden passageways in the void and navigate and adjust routes between the stars. Navigating ships at sea becomes a straightforward task for them.

“Sequence 5, Tidal Scholar, further masters gravity and can whip up massive waves capable of shattering ships and demolishing docks.

“As for Sequence 4, it’s known as Heavybringer. Unfortunately, I’m not too certain about their specific abilities.”

Lumian remained silent, taking a couple of steps back and signaling for Franca and the others to continue questioning.

His primary concern centered around Loki’s connection to Hisoka; anything else seemed less crucial.

Franca studied Bard for a moment before inquiring, “Have you recruited other members into April Fool’s?”

“Yes,” Bard admitted without hesitation.

After detailing what he knew about the April Fool’s members outside the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, Franca asked with curiosity, “Why did you choose the nickname Bard? Considering your past identity and current class, wouldn’t Kaitō or Kid be more fitting?”

Bard responded calmly, “My current body was a bard, a wandering artist who often dabbled in thievery and swindling. He met his end when discovered trying to cheat others out of their money, suffering a severe beating.”

Cheat, swindle, and steal—Franca thought. You know everything; it suits you quite well.

Franca turned to Hela and Gandalf, stating, “I have no further questions.”

“Neither do I,” Gandalf acknowledged, recognizing that Bard’s life was approaching its end.

Muggle’s brother wouldn’t let him off the hook!

“Neither do I,” Hela added.

Lumian raised his right hand, generating a dark-green glow at his fingertips.

The light transformed into a strange ray, penetrating Bard’s chest.

Weakening Ray!

Lumian still had access to a week's worth of sea power, approaching the level of Sequence 5.

Bard's face contorted, muscles and nerves reacting instinctively.

His chest, close to his neck, rapidly melted and peeled, exposing the flesh beneath.

Seeing this, Gandalf sighed again.

Gandalf sighed, condensing a straight sword with Sunrise Gleam and driving it towards Bard.

The light blade impaled Bard's head, and he crumpled to the ground with a thud, held down by the sword.

Bard writhed like a skinned insect, convulsing as life left his body.

Lumian observed in silence, refraining from intervening as Gandalf freed Bard.

When Bard's breath ceased, and he lay motionless, Lumian turned to Gandalf and Hela.

"Thank you for your assistance."

"It's our duty. We're all accountable for the harm April Fool's caused to the other members of the Research Society," Gandalf responded gravely.

Lumian didn't contest. Instead, he disclosed, "Before the operation, I mentioned joining a secret organization before assuming my sister's identity. To seek revenge, I invited members of that secret organization to assist. I believe you all have seen or sensed their presence."

He strategically linked the appearance of the Tarot Club to himself, safeguarding Franca's identity as a Minor Arcana card holder.

"And which organization is that?" Gandalf inquired curiously.

As per Hela's account, the secret organization exhibited Angel-level power, and the demigod "Cinderella" who appeared at sea was equally formidable.

"The Tarot Club," Lumian revealed truthfully.

"You're one of the Minor Arcana card holders?" Gandalf deduced.

He had heard about the Tarot Club.

Lumian nodded without denying it.

Curiosity piqued, Franca asked, “Which card represents that ‘Cinderella’ demigod? And why does her magic have such a dreamy quality? Moreover, it resembles fairy tales from before our transmigration!”

She maintained her role while genuinely expressing curiosity.

Lumian recalled Madam Magician’s guidance and grinned.

“Major Arcana card, The Hermit.”

Pausing momentarily, he added, “I’m uncertain about why she can transform your fairy tales into magic. What I do know is that she’s closely tied to Emperor Roselle’s descendant.”

“Descendant of Emperor Roselle’s eldest daughter, Bernadette?” Franca and the others, having read numerous entries from Roselle’s diary, immediately speculated.

“Perhaps, but it’s not Bernadette herself,” Lumian honestly disclosed.

That was the extent of his knowledge.

“Is that so…” Franca, Gandalf, and Hela felt enlightened.

So, it was connected to Emperor Roselle’s faction!

It made sense for the Emperor to create fairytale magic.

After a brief pause, Lumian suggested, “You should probably prevent the Research Society from disseminating those fairy tales.”

“Understood,” Gandalf agreed.

Lumian pondered for a moment before stating, “I’ve concluded my involvement with the Research Society and have joined another secret organization. It’s no longer suitable for me to participate in the Research Society’s gatherings. You may find an opportunity to reveal the truth to the other members.”

Gandalf and Hela exchanged glances and proposed, “You can continue playing the role of Muggle and acquire resources and assistance from the Research Society. We owe it to your sister.”

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Chapter 595 - 595 Spoils of War

595 Spoils of War

Lumian wasted no time with pleasantries and accepted Gandalf's invitation without hesitation.

Firstly, within the vast expanse of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society were numerous pathways. Besides the relatively scarce Devils, he gained access to a wealth of knowledge and various items. While these might not surpass what he already possessed in strength, they held the potential to unexpectedly shine in specific situations.

Secondly, this decision provided him with a pretext to continue assuming the role of Aurore as a Muggle. It created the illusion that his sister still existed somewhere in the world.

After the quartet concluded their discussion about the events in the peculiar waters, Bard's lifeless body underwent a startling transformation. Ephemeral lights coalesced in the corpse's right hand, causing both flesh and bones to crumble simultaneously.

Eventually, the palm resembled that of a baby—small and pallid.

The pale hue swiftly shifted, adopting a darker shade reminiscent of the ancient palace's surroundings.

It was a Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic.

Lumian focused his attention and detected a faint grayish-white fog within the shrunken palm.

He approached Bard's corpse, crouching down to search for additional items.

With this task accomplished, Lumian retrieved the spoils obtained from Mad Lady and Loki from his Traveler's Bag, placing them on the decrepit stone slabs of the ancient palace.

These included: a transparent, almost ethereal crystal, a bracelet with three diamonds flanked by four different-colored gems, a rose-gold ring adorned with crimson, blood-like gems, a simple silver ring, a dark-gold mask capable of concealing the entire face, a featureless small doll bound with white cloth, an intricate but exquisite mechanical music box, and a grayish-white brooch with a metallic gleam resembling lightning.

Accompanied by a relatively thin blank painting album and the Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic, the total count reached ten items.

Lumian then looked up and addressed Hela and Gandalf, “You can choose—

one each.”

“It’s our duty,” Gandalf asserted, signifying the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society’s commitment to rectify past errors.

Speaking in Aurore’s tone, Lumian, shrouded in his hood, remarked,

“Duty doesn’t preclude the choice of spoils. Just because official Beyonders must protect citizens doesn’t mean they can’t receive rewards.”

Gandalf pondered for a moment before turning to Hela. Seeing her lack of objection, he sighed and conceded, “Fine.”

Lumian’s lips formed a smile as he pointed to each item, providing a concise introduction.

“The illusory transparent stone is a Traveler Beyonder characteristic left behind by Mad Lady, but it’s severely corrupted. The thin gray fog emanating from it serves as evidence of this.

“The Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic is similarly corrupted by that Celestial Worthy, but the severity is not extreme. It’s slightly less severe than the remains of most heretics after their deaths.

“That bracelet comes from Loki, known as the Seven-Stone Bracelet. Each diamond corresponds to a teleportation, and each colored gem corresponds to a ten-second Blink. Once used, it’s gone. The drawback is that you hear random sounds when you wear it—ranging from a man having an affair to sounds from an unknown creature.

“This golden ring, named Blood Gold, bears an engraved inner loop with a brief sentence—’Controlling flesh and blood means controlling everything.’ Its function enables the wearer to control their flesh and blood like a Rose Bishop. Additionally, they can employ three flesh and blood magics—Flesh Bomb, Flesh Cloak, and Flesh Blood Fusion. The drawback is repeated use may lead to dependence. Ceasing to wear it results in the body collapsing into a pile of flesh and blood, unable to maintain human form. Continual wear may lead to madness and loss of control.

“That silver ring is a semi-finished Ring of the Sea Queen, possessing a high-

level Steal ability usable only once. The drawback is that an ancient Angel will take notice of you.

“The dark-gold mask, a possession of Loki, survived his self-destruction. Its exact function remains unknown. Sensing it, one might feel an intense desire to wear it, believing it would grant abnormal power. Let’s call it the Demon Mask.

“This featureless white cloth doll, a creation of Mad Lady, corresponds to the Faceless of the Seer pathway. When affixed to your shoulder, adjusting its facial features and figure is akin to altering your own appearance. Simultaneously, it empowers the wearer to master the ability to create Paper Figurine Substitutes. However, only the first paper figurine proves effective. Beyond these functions, it allows the wearer to employ flames for a dynamic leap and develop a certain premonition of danger. Be warned, though—

carrying it around brings weak bad luck. Moreover, one day, you may realize that its face mirrors yours, and you will cease to be yourself.”

“This mechanical music box, discovered on Loki’s corpse, is from an unknown pathway or Sequence. It’s rumored that the music it plays has the potential to either kill or drive anyone who hears it into madness. However, a prerequisite exists—you must hear the music for at least ten seconds.”

“I just found this blank painting album from Bard. Its precise effects and drawbacks remain unknown, but based on my experience, the depictions on its pages may come to life or exhibit special effects. Notably, only nine pages remain, showing signs of tearing.”

“This brooch, belonging to Mad Lady, appears crafted in anticipation of the loss of the Governor of the Sea’s authority and the sea’s berserk state. It grants the wearer fish scales, mitigating damage and enabling underwater breathing and movement akin to a fish. Each strike carries the effect of Electric Shock, with a near 100% probability of triggering natural lightning strikes in thunderstorms. Aligned with Sequence 6 or 5 of the Sailor pathway, the negative consequence is a heightened likelihood of being struck by lightning on rainy days, coupled with increased irritability and anxiety after wearing it.”

Lumian concluded the introduction of the spoils of war, his knowledge derived from Madam Magician.

It was evident that for the success of the sea prayer ritual, April Fool’s had entrusted most of their mystical items to Mad Lady. Bard had only left behind an ordinary-looking blank painting album. On the other hand, Loki, the leader of April Fool’s, had seemingly retained his items privately. Whether it was his nature or a deliberate choice to retrieve them for hunting Ludwig remained unknown.

Gandalf looked at Hela. “Take your pick first.”

Hela approached Lumian, carefully inspecting the ten items

before singling out Mad Lady’s Traveler Beyonder characteristic.

“It’s severely corrupted. Whether you decide to keep it or have an Artisan craft items, it’s quite dangerous. Leave it to me.”

In other words, she suggested that she had a method to handle it and mitigate potential harm.

“Alright.” Lumian didn’t object.

He respected the wishes of each individual and allowed them to choose whatever they wanted. Of course, the order of selection mattered too. His team would be last, and he would be last.

Hela extended her right hand, and the night outside the ancient palace seemed to stir.

The illusory crystal shrouded in grayish-white fog vanished.

After Hela returned to her spot, Gandalf made his selection.

Franca’s heart skipped a beat as she observed the president scrutinizing the remaining nine items. She whispered,

Don’t choose the Seven-Stone Bracelet, don’t choose the Seven-Stone Bracelet…

That was the teleportation she had been longing for!

The Traveler Beyonder characteristic was too dangerous. She didn’t dare to set her sights on it. Although the Seven-Stone Bracelet was an expendable item, its advantage lay in its many uses and its relatively manageable negative effects.

Gandalf’s intense gaze fixed on the dark-gold mask, his mutterings barely audible,

“I’ve got a burning desire to delve into its powers and potential…

“But it’s too risky. I’m itching to put it on now…

“Yes, the Blood Gold ring aids my experiments into dangerous matters. The blank painting album requires further exploration…

“The high-level Steal ability is also worth studying… But being noticed by an ancient Angel is no small matter…”

After thorough contemplation, Gandalf turned to Hela and spoke, “Can I leave the silver ring here? I want to arrive half an hour early to study it before every gathering.”

“Alright,” Hela agreed to Gandalf’s request.

Thus, the president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society opted for the half-finished Ring of the Sea Queen.

Franca let out a sigh of relief and grinned at Gandalf.

“President, you really should’ve gone down the Reader pathway. You suit their style perfectly.”

Why did he have to pick Warrior just to live up to the title of Gandalf?

Gandalf, the half-giant in a linen robe, glanced at Franca, smiling without uttering a word.

Lumian stowed the remaining items back into his Traveler’s Bag, not affording Franca an opportunity to choose first.

…

At Port Santa, near Solow Motel, inside Loki’s rented room.

Lumian received a response from Madam Magician:

“Even I can’t decipher the intricate abilities of that dark-gold mask, indicating its exceptional nature. Inquire with Mr. K if he desires it. If not, leave it in my care for now. I’ll seal it and await the opportune moment. It might prove useful when the time comes.

“Ma’am Hermit has her eyes on the mechanical music box. Other items hold little significance for her, but this one, at least, is exquisite.

“Mr. Moon expresses interest in the faceless doll; as for the reason, I remain in the dark.

“I’ll entrust you with distributing the rest.”

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Chapter 596 - 596 Lord’s Revelation?

596 Lord’s Revelation?

In Mr. K’s temporary apartment in Port Santa,

Lumian unpacked the remaining spoils of war from his Traveler’s Bag, placing them on the coffee table.

He shot a glance at Mr. K, who, now adorned in a black robe with a deep hood, spoke first, “These are the gains from the operation. Perhaps there’s a revelation from the Lord among them.”

Mr. K nodded subtly, diverting his attention to the items, his gaze fixating on the dark-gold mask.

In a deep, hoarse voice, he mused, “I sense something special about it. This should be a revelation from the Lord.”

With a swift motion, Mr. K extended his right hand, pulling the strange dark-

gold mask into his grasp amidst a sudden gust of wind.

However, the Aurora Order Oracle didn’t put the mask on; instead, he discreetly stowed it away in a hidden pocket within his black robe.

Witnessing this, Lumian was momentarily taken aback.

He had been contemplating how to subtly carry out Madam Magician’s instructions, aiming to inquire if Mr. K desired the dark-gold mask. Surprisingly, he had spontaneously fabricated a Lord-given revelation as an excuse. Before Lumian could specify which item it was, Mr. K had chosen the dark-gold mask himself.

Could it genuinely be a revelation from the Lord? Hiss… Lumian took a deep breath.

Had Madam Magician sent me to ask Mr. K because she foresaw something or glimpsed something?

These high-ranking figures always prefer to communicate through hints and revelations. Couldn’t they be more direct?

Amidst his thoughts, Lumian stowed away the remaining items and earnestly addressed Mr. K,

“I didn’t expect the matter to escalate like this. I initially believed that with you and my sister’s friends from her past, it would suffice to seek vengeance. Yet, it spiraled into something of a much higher magnitude. Thankfully, my sister’s allies were vigilant and leveraged their connections.”

The sincerity in the first half of Lumian’s statement contrasted with the second half, which explained the influx of demigods, even Angel-level forces, this time. He subtly shifted the blame to Franca and Aurore’s associates.

Lumian sensed a high likelihood that Mr. K might not fully buy into his explanation. Disregarding the possibility of the Aurora Order’s Oracle Grazing a relatively high Sequence Spectator, Lumian believed that the intentional arrangements and subtle traces left behind by the entity he believed in were sufficient evidence of constant watching, listening, and awareness. As for Sequence 8 of the Shepherd pathway, known as Listeners, they often received revelations from that figure.

Nevertheless, Lumian needed a plausible excuse. He couldn’t just tell Mr. K outright, “Yes, I am a member of the Aurora Order, part of the Tarot Club, and also affiliated with the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. My Major Arcana card holder is an Angel, and I know countless demigods who can lend a hand. Besides worshiping your Lord, I also believe in Mr. Fool. Occasionally, I praise the Sun and say By Steam…”

Wasn’t this equivalent to provoking him in his face?

Unspoken truths didn’t always need to be voiced.

Mr. K subtly nodded.

“Good job. Dealing with matters involving evil gods demands all your strength.”

Then, he added, “After learning that your adversary is tied to an ancient evil god, I’ve already reported it to the higher-ups. At that time, our Aurora Order’s Angels were likely keeping an eye. If anything truly occurred, one or more would have definitely descended.”

“…” Lumian’s expression froze.

Did the Aurora Order’s Angel also observe the spaceship back then?

Isn’t this setup too exaggerated? April Fool’s isn’t even an organization with a single demigod!

Is Celestial Worthy such a taboo when it comes to Madam Magician and the Aurora Order?

It’s understandable for the Tarot Club to give it significance, especially considering its connection to Mr. Fool’s awakening. But why does the Aurora Order behave as if they’re confronting a formidable adversary…

Lumian pushed aside the issue of inviting an Angel and four demigods for his revenge. He couldn't help but sigh at the Aurora Order's exaggerated reaction.

Mr. K fixed his gaze on his subordinate and delivered a passionate lecture, "Just because high-ranking individuals are keeping an eye on us doesn't mean we can be lax and handle things half-heartedly. These individuals have numerous crucial matters to attend to. They might only cast an occasional glance our way. If we don't put in enough effort and work diligently, it could easily lead to complete failure. And in that scenario, death won't be sufficient to atone for our sins."

"Yes, yes, you're right," Lumian echoed Mr. K without any intention of arguing.

…

Upon returning to Loki's rented apartment, Lumian gathered the remaining five spoils of war and grinned at Franca, Jenna, and Anthony.

"It's finally our turn to choose."

Not wanting to tease the eager Franca any further, Lumian pointed to the dining table where the items were laid out.

"Take your pick first."

"Hehe." Franca smiled sheepishly, shamelessly picking up the Seven-Stone Bracelet. She exclaimed excitedly, "I can teleport too!"

"Aren't you afraid of overhearing something you shouldn't?" Lumian teased.

Franca had already considered this issue.

"It's not like I'll wear it forever. I'll only use it when I need it. And teleportation takes only a short time. If I really hear an unknown voice, the impact will be minimal. I should be fine if I remove it in time.

"Don't worry. The negative effects of Beyonder items similar to charms aren't strong. They can even be considered weak."

Lumian scoffed dismissively.

"Have you forgotten what you have on you?

"Primordial Demoness figurine! Mirror World Fragment!"

What if she heard the Primordial Demoness's ravings?

Franca cleared her throat and said, "I'm now a member of the Demoness Sect and a believer in the Primordial Demoness. What's wrong with listening to the voice of God? At most, it'll make me excited. When the time comes, heh heh…"

She glanced at Lumian and Jenna, keeping her thoughts to herself.

“I’ll get your help!”

Franca immediately added, “Furthermore, my Primordial Demoness figurine and the Mirror World Fragment are stored in the Traveler’s Bag. They won’t be taken out unless absolutely necessary. It’s as if they’re sealed.”

Lumian remained silent. He turned to Jenna and Anthony, asking, “Which one of you wants to go first?”

“Anthony. He played a more significant role than me this time,” Jenna replied politely.

Anthony smiled.

“Are you disregarding me as an Intisian man? I still believe in ‘lady’s first.’”

Considering Jenna’s usual Showy Diva demeanor, she might have typically responded with something like, “Those Intisian men who claim ‘lady’s first’ only want to get them in bed. Are you having such thoughts about me too?”

Jenna, despite her lack of overt actions, had a knack for teasing in a crude manner.

However, at this moment, after exchanging glances with Lumian and Franca, she turned to Anthony with sincerity.

“I’m in a dilemma. I want you to help me eliminate an option.”

Anthony didn’t decline and assessed the remaining four items.

“The Blood Gold ring enhances my survivability and strengthens my direct attacks. However, whether it’s dependency or madness, it’s something a Psychiatrist should avoid. Furthermore, I’m now a Hypnotist. I can use Psychological Invisibility and have the protection of Dragon Scales.

“Apart from underwater mobility, this brooch can only be used in close combat. Why would a Hypnotist like me engage in close combat?

“The Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristics and blank painting album aren’t bad. If the former is crafted into a mystical item with weak negative effects, it should be very useful. However, that’s not a certainty for the moment unless I find a very good Artisan…”

Anthony decided on the blank painting album.

“As an information broker, I’m adept at sketching. Such an item that can create different effects is very suitable for a Hypnotist to observe first before taking action.”

Without needing Madam Magician's explanation, Franca had already used Magic Mirror Divination to confirm the function of the blank painting album: "The objects drawn on it might become alive and stay so for a short period of time. They might also have different effects. The painting paper will lose its mystical effects after being used once. The negative effect is never to respond to the knocks coming from the painting paper."

Lumian and Jenna agreed that it was very similar to the abilities of Pixies.

After Anthony stored the painting paper, Jenna seized the Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic without hesitation.

"Why?" Lumian inquired with amusement.

Jenna looked at him and grinned happily.

"It's the most valuable! Among the remaining three items, only it corresponds to a Sequence 5. Even if it fails to become a mystical item, it can be sold for a large sum of money."

I still owe Franca 45,000 verl d'or. In the future, I might even purchase the Demoness of Pleasure potion formula from her.

"An excellent reason." Lumian casually glanced at the remaining two items and placed the grayish-white lightning-shaped brooch on his chest. "I want this. In the future, call it the Fury of the Sea."

He chose the brooch over Blood Gold because, as an Ascetic, he could bear impatience and other emotions. Pure madness was too dangerous for him, given the darkness in his heart.

Lumian tossed the Blood Gold ring to Franca.

"Put it in your Traveler's Bag. Anyone can use it whenever needed. It shouldn't be used often."

"You won't give it to Madam Magician?" Franca asked in puzzlement.

"Do you think she'll take a fancy to it?" Lumian stuffed the Fury of the Sea into his Traveler's Bag and chuckled. "Her spoils of war are naturally the humanoid Sealed Artifact, but she might return it to the Eternal Blazing Sun Church."

With that, Lumian turned to Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, "Next, I'm going to do something unsuitable for others to see. Do you want to watch?"

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Chapter 597 - 597 Too Dirty

597 Too Dirty

Franca's curiosity was piqued by Lumian's words.

"Is there anything we can't see?"

"Are you sure you want to watch? I'm afraid it will deal a strong blow to your mind," Lumian asked in a teasing tone.

Amused, Franca pointed at herself and retorted, "Me? I'm not a minor. My mind is very mature. Why wouldn't I dare to look? Heh, I'm much more knowledgeable than you, boy!"

Jenna nodded in agreement, silently endorsing Franca's claim.

Without further persuasion, Lumian left the apartment and headed to the room he had rented with a fake ID to monitor himself.

Lugano was staying there with Ludwig.

Franca followed with Jenna and Anthony, muttering, "I thought it was something major. Isn't it just going to your godson? What impact on the mind…"

Lumian signaled for Lugano to retreat temporarily. Then, he retrieved two gruesome items from his Traveler's Bag, forming a humanoid figure with them.

Maintaining an unchanged expression, Lumian looked at Ludwig and pointed at the two parts of Mad Lady's corpse.

"Is it edible?"

Edible… Franca was taken aback.

Her gaze shifted between the repulsive corpse parts and Ludwig's boyish appearance. Suddenly, she felt a wave of nausea, as if her mind had been corrupted by the imagined scene.

Indeed, Lumian's godson gained knowledge or abilities by consuming specific creatures, including humans. Memory, after all, was a form of knowledge!

Franca couldn't suppress her urge to retch, regretting her decision to witness the cannibalistic act.

To make matters worse, she knew the person who had been consumed—Mad Lady. She had interacted with her before.

Jenna's face contorted, clearly struggling to contain her churning stomach acid. Anthony, a seasoned veteran accustomed to witnessing scenes of gore, subconsciously frowned.

Ludwig scrutinized the two bloody corpse parts in Lumian's hands for a moment before slowly shaking his head.

"It's too dirty."

Dirty? Could it be a reference to the severe corruption of the Celestial Worthy? Even you won't dare to swallow it for fear of something happening? Lumian threw Mad Lady's two corpse parts to the ground with regret, summoning a crimson fireball that was nearly white.

Rather than exploding, the fireball adhered to Mad Lady's corpse, burning and compressing it into charred dust.

Amidst the dancing flames and the burning fragrance, Franca and Jenna breathed a sigh of relief.

Lumian pulled up a chair and sat down, addressing Ludwig, who was nonchalantly nibbling on a cupcake, "Wasn't that person's arm dirty?"

He was referring to Loki.

"Just a little. The dirtiest part isn't on the arm," Ludwig commented casually, as if discussing which fish were poisonous and how they should be consumed.

Only then did Lumian get to the point.

"What did you gain from that person's arm?"

"Some knowledge," Ludwig replied, nonchalantly nibbling on a sponge cake covered in light cream, as if he preferred not to be disturbed while eating.

Lumian, feigning indifference, asked bluntly, "What are they?"

Ludwig's voice alternated between clarity and muffled tones as he replied, "Sequence Knowledge about his pathway… There are two other terms… One is Dylan… and the other is Orville…"

Dylan? Is that the name of Loki's ancient castle? And what's Orville? Lumian's curiosity peaked, prompting him to interrupt Ludwig.

"Apart from the name itself, is there any relevant knowledge?"

Ludwig seized the opportunity to take another bite of cake. After chewing and swallowing, he said, “No, but… these two terms seem to be connected. Orville should be the name of a place, and Dylan is the castle’s name.”

Connected… Name of a place… Castle Dylan is in Orville? Where is Orville? Lumian turned to Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, realizing they were clueless, shaking their heads in ignorance.

After a moment of contemplation, Lumian spoke in a deep voice,

“Our next priority is to find information about Orville and Dylan through our respective channels.”

Getting nods of agreement from Franca and the others, Lumian asked Ludwig again, “Anything else?”

“His spirituality is quite abundant, and his quality isn’t bad. He doesn’t like hard liquor or drinking freely. He only drinks champagne and occasionally has coffee. He’s a loyal advocate of tea leaves. He’s healthy, has good bowel movement, and urinates normally. He hates the smell of the washroom…” Ludwig shared the information obtained from the half arm.

Franca listened with keen interest, and just as Lumian was about to interject, Ludwig divulged another piece of valuable information:

“He owns Castle Dylan, but he doesn’t reside there. He only returns occasionally. He’s not the sole proprietor yet. Many areas there aren’t accessible to him. Recently, he unlocked a room and acquired a dark-gold mask.

“That mask will grant him immense power, but once he wears it, he’ll face terrifying matters.”

Could that dark-gold mask be a relic from the original owner of Castle Dylan? Perhaps a memento from the previous leader of the Secret Order? Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

To him, this information wasn’t particularly crucial as the dark-gold mask had already been handed over to Mr. K. Thus, he had no reason to be concerned about it.

Franca, Jenna, and Anthony prepared to return to Trier after the Q&A session with Ludwig, having confirmed that they had gleaned all they could.

Of course, Lumian took responsibility for their return journey. Franca couldn’t bring herself to use one of the Seven-Stone Bracelets at the moment.

“By the way,” Lumian looked at Franca, pondering for a moment. “Contact the Eternal Blazing Sun Church and see if they’re willing to exchange information about the humanoid Sealed Artifact and its corresponding story. We’ll make efforts to facilitate this transaction.”

ention that he was uncertain about his human status, Lumian realized his resemblance to the humanoid Sealed Artifact. However, Bard retained his rationality and clarity, possessing a relatively independent fate. Otherwise, he could be deemed a walking Grade 0 humanoid Sealed Artifact. This sparked Lumian's curiosity about the humanoid Sealed Artifact, wanting to uncover what had happened to her and why she had transformed in such a manner.

Franca nodded and instinctively said, "But, uh, that lady only mentioned the possibility of returning it, nothing definite."

"We're merely striving to facilitate the transaction. It's not guaranteed either." Lumian chuckled.

He quickly sent Franca, Jenna, and Anthony back to Trier Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative before entering Aquina Street. Strolling among the citizens still immersed in the afterglow of the celebration, he made his way towards Solow Motel.

Half of the motel's fifth floor had collapsed, and the fourth floor was severely damaged. Otta, the owner, observed the scene with sorrow and helplessness. He wanted to cry, but the tears wouldn't come.

At a certain point, Noelia of the Fertility Order approached Louis Berry, the adventurer overseeing Solow Motel. She spoke in a formal tone, "Your partner said you'd be responsible for the compensation."

Lumian retrieved 10,000 gold risot from his Traveler's Bag and handed it to Noelia.

Noelia glanced at his black coin bag and sighed with emotion.

"That's good stuff."

The combat nun then counted the compensation.

"10,000 risot? That's enough to build two motels like this!"

"How generous. Just as expected from an adventurer who recently bagged a bounty of 300,000 gold risot."

Lumian brushed off Noelia's teasing and continued, "This is the reward from the Paco family's commission."

"The Paco family…" Noelia fell silent.

The Paco family's matriarch, the current family head, and his wife—all perished in this conflict.

Lumian pressed on, weaving through the crowd as if on a leisurely stroll.

In the dusk's afterglow, he heard singing, seabirds chirping, and citizens animatedly discussing the past few days.

"Did you see that? In the morning, seabirds came to pay their respects to the Governor of the Sea!

"Is this year's sea prayer ritual that successful?

"That's right. Back then, many vines grew crazily. Many people fainted from joy. This is Earth Mother's recognition of the sea prayer ritual!

"No, that's not right. It represents a bumper harvest. It means this year's fish harvest will fill ship after ship!

"Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!

"Praise the Governor of the Sea!

"…"

Though Lumian wasn't privy to the Church of Earth Mother's method to make citizens view the morning mysticism roundup as a miracle, he sensed joy and delight in everyone's hearts.

Leisurely, he thought, I wonder if the remaining committee members of the Fisheries Guild have finalized the choice for the fake Governor of the Sea. Sure, the real Simon Guiaro is the top contender. However, it doesn't matter who takes the role this year. The power leaked by the spaceship is now in my possession. In the next year or even two, there won't be frequent catastrophes in these waters. The sea creatures will reproduce faster thanks to the 'watering'…

Heh heh, from a certain perspective, I'm the true Governor of the Sea—for just a week…

In the midst of the lively parade and numerous street vendors, Lumian casually located a bar and ordered an undiluted Manzan and a large cup of locally brewed dark-gold malt beer.

Placing the Manzan glass across from the small round table, he lifted his beer, clinking it. Then, he muttered with a smile, "Did you see that? Did you hear that? Their dance, their singing, and the sound of fish multiplying.

"Isn't this the future you desire?"

With that said, Lumian downed a mouthful of dark-gold beer.

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Chapter 598 - 598 Confrontation and Reconciliation

598 Confrontation and Reconciliation

The night draped the land in darkness, and stars adorned the sky above Port Santa. The festive crowd had dispersed, leaving behind the remnants of celebration—discarded litter and the lingering scent of alcohol.

With the official end of the holiday, the city would soon buzz with work again.

Lumian lingered at the bar until closing time. As he stepped out, the deserted streets welcomed him, illuminated only by sporadic gas lamps.

The late-night air hinted at the approaching winter's chill. Lumian breathed it in, feeling the crisp freshness entering his lungs. The rhythmic crash of waves against the shore added to the night's serenity.

In seemingly high spirits, Lumian, slightly tipsy, walked past the aftermath of the celebration with hands in his pockets, unnoticed in the silent surroundings.

He made his way back to the room rented under a false identity.

Upon opening the door, he found Lugano pacing anxiously in the living room.

"Still up?" Lumian raised an eyebrow.

Lugano, looking like he'd recovered from a serious injury, spoke with a complex expression,

"An hour ago, Captain Noelia of the combat nuns paid you a visit. Not in armor, but a stunning dress. She has quite the figure…"

"And then?" Lumian inquired, a smirk on his face.

Lugano replied with envy, "She left disappointed when I told her you weren't around."

Lumian chuckled, "What's it got to do with you? Why are you still awake after an hour?"

Lugano coughed awkwardly, "I had a sudden contemplation about my future. Should I return to Trier and pursue a medical career, or should I opt for a different path?"

Ignoring the Doctor's musings, Lumian, with a smile, washed up briefly and retired to his room, succumbing to sleep.

In his dreams, recent events blended into a chaotic tapestry, weaving stranger and more bizarre stories.

At precisely 6 a.m., Lumian awoke and promptly sat up.

His thoughts sharpened as he recalled the dream. Suddenly, a detail struck him:

Disregarding the possibility of the Aurora Order having covertly observed the situation, the crucial aspect of the sea prayer ritual was Amon's utilization of the altar in Milo Village to discreetly imbue Lie with a "Steal" ability.

Without this intervention, the opening of the spaceship's energy passageway would have led to a reversal. Deprived of the sea's power, he couldn't have ensnared Mad Lady with the authority of the Governor of the Sea, delaying her until Madam Magician's arrival.

However, Celestial Worthy, positioned at the pinnacle of the Seer, Apprentice, and Marauder pathways, should possess an in-depth understanding of Marauder abilities. It seemed unlikely that He hadn't considered the possibility of an Amon hiding at the altar, granting "Steal" powers.

It made sense that He hadn't shared this knowledge with April Fool's; they were expendable tools, and excessive information might weaken their resolve during the operation. But the overall plan shouldn't have crumbled due to this.

Were Celestial Worthy's intentions more intricate than they seemed? Had He secretly achieved a goal, or did Amon and His unseen ally orchestrate events in advance?

Had Amon truly kept watch over the altar in Milo Village without pause, last year's sea prayer ritual might not have failed. There remains the prospect that He wanted to derive amusement from April Fool's antics.

The chaos wrought by April Fool's last year was perhaps understandable. Shouldn't the most straightforward approach this year involve discreetly allowing the completion of the Ring of the Sea Queen during the ancestor honoring ritual? Subsequently, events could unfold with Ultraman assuming the guise of the incoming Governor of the Sea, only to be dumbfounded when the sea sacrifice ritual succeeded!

Why the convoluted path? What was the purpose behind these seemingly unnecessary steps?

There must be something I'm missing…

Lumian massaged his temples and rose from the bed.

The revelation didn't surprise him. It would be abnormal if he quickly unraveled the true motives of every participant in such complex scenarios involving high-level entities.

Regardless, his goal was accomplished, and the perilous black hole in the spaceship remained sealed. The rest was not his concern. If he could decipher it, great. If not, he could always write to Madam Magician to provide a timely reminder.

After a jog around the still-slumbering Port Santa, Lumian penned a letter to Madam Magician, detailing his reflections.

As Lumian finished, Lugano, who had been out gathering breakfast for Ludwig, returned to his quarters.

Taking a moment to contemplate, Lumian handed over 1,000 gold risot to Lugano. With a composed tone, he stated, "I'll be away for a few days. Take care of Ludwig. When I return, this commission will be completely over."

When the time came, Lumian planned on taking a boat to the Southern Continent. Lumian intended to conspire and make preparations along the way. His aim was to be ready for the final conspiracy and advance to Sequence 5 upon reaching his destination in the Southern Continent.

Without prying into his employer's destination, Lugano nervously asked, "W-

will there be any danger in the next few days?"

"It's done," Lumian replied with a smile. "If any other danger arises, go to the Fertility Order and seek protection. Isn't that what you've been anticipating?"

Lugano grinned sheepishly, reassured by Lumian's demeanor.

Under the shining sun of Port Santa, with delicious food and passionate women, staying a few more days seemed like a pleasant prospect!

…

A two-story relay carriage raced through the village towns scattered across turquoise pastures, making its way towards the base of the Pyraez mountain range.

Maintaining his disguise as the adventurer Louis Berry, Lumian occupied a window seat in the carriage, silently observing the passing scenery.

Each turquoise pasture was adorned with flocks of sheep, resembling scattered clouds. Shepherds, clad in practical and mobile robes, strolled amidst the grazing animals.

Some had their own shacks, while others utilized small, wheeled shepherd's huts for mobility.

Occasionally, local villagers attempted to drive away the incoming shepherds, only to be met with sly smiles or placated with money and supplies.

Faced with determined locals, the shepherds, arriving from the mountain pass, reluctantly moved to more desolate areas, contending with the watchful eyes of wild wolves and other creatures…

The scenes spoken of by the Cordu shepherds presented themselves vividly to Lumian, searing a memory in his mind.

Two days later, the relay carriage halted at the foot of the Pyraez mountain range, pausing in a small town outside the mountain pass.

Lumian changed into a black tweed coat, preparing to venture into the mountain alone.

As he ascended the mountain ridge, the cold wind intensified, rendering the wilderness almost devoid of life.

Navigating the sparsely vegetated mountainous terrain, Lumian followed the trails left by shepherds and merchants. Under the birdless gray sky, the desolate landscape featured withered trees and a meager stream. Winter's solitude permeated the air.

In the cold solitude, it took him nearly three days to traverse the Dariège mountain range and reach the river outside Cordu.

Circling the towering forest, Lumian promptly spotted the blood-colored pillar, emanating the aura of a mountain peak despite its modest height.

As Lumian gazed, footsteps approached from ahead.

A middle-aged man, clad in a leather coat and clasping his hands together, appeared.

Trembling in the cold wind, the forest ranger shouted, "Don't go any further. That village is gone!"

Lumian's eyes moved beyond the ranger to the collapsed and burned structures in the distance.

After a brief pause, he inquired in a deep voice, "What happened to that village?"

The forest ranger glanced around and lowered his voice, "They said they believed in demons. The villagers went crazy, burned down their houses, and walked into the abyss.

"Look, would a normal village be like this?"

Lumian fell silent for a long time.

Seeing this, the forest ranger sincerely said, “In any case, those old men instructed me to prevent anyone from entering this village. They said that it’s bad luck; it would provoke the demons.”

Lumian remained silent, refraining from further inquiry.

Staring at the unfamiliar yet oddly familiar ruins, he turned away from the village entrance. Step by step, he approached the nearest alpine pasture, the wind howling around him.

The grass here had completely withered, blown away by the wind, leaving behind barren patches of brown soil.

Lumian surveyed the ruins of Cordu, then located a shack abandoned by the shepherds. Inside, he lay down, closing his eyes and remaining motionless.

If only everything that had transpired before could be dismissed as a dream.

When he woke, the alpine pasture was vibrant green once more, birds returned to the sky, and Ol’ Tavern bustled with farmers and herdsmen. His sister persistently urged him to study, while Reimund, Ava, and the others pondered uncertain futures, unaware of the life awaiting them…

…

The sun shone brightly, yet the air in Port Santa had begun to carry a chill.

Abruptly, Lumian stood before Lugano and Ludwig.

“You’re finally back!” Lugano exclaimed, relief evident in his voice, as if he had encountered a savior.

Ludwig’s appetite had surged once more, and the 1,000 risot had disappeared faster than anticipated.

Another week, and Lugano would have to contemplate using his own funds.

He couldn’t allow the child to go hungry; he might resort to eating him!

Lumian chuckled in response, saying, “The commission is over. I’ll pay the balance now. Do you want my help to teleport back to Trier, or do you prefer taking a boat yourself or crossing the Dariège mountain range?”

Lugano fell silent, seemingly grappling with a decision.

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Chapter 599 - 599 If You Have “Power,” Use It

599 If You Have “Power,” Use It

Lumian didn’t hurry Lugano. He preferred to observe the Doctor’s decision-

making.

After a pause, Lugano gathered his courage and inquired, “Will you be bringing Ludwig along in the future?”

“Of course,” Lumian replied, glancing sideways at Ludwig, who was devouring a roasted octopus.

Had he not received the 0-01 information from the Church of Knowledge, he wouldn’t have considered keeping such a child around. However, Ludwig had proven his usefulness.

In the future, he might serve as another Loki trap.

Lugano swallowed and offered, “I can assist you in caring for Ludwig, so you won’t need to factor him in when dealing with matters—unlike how you could simply leave whenever you pleased in the past.”

As anticipated… Lumian wasn’t taken aback by Lugano’s proposal.

He raised his chin slightly and inquired, “Reason?”

Lugano smiled sheepishly and explained, “During this journey, I’ve witnessed much and faced attacks. It made me realize that Sequence 8s are still insignificant in the mysticism world. They’re ill-equipped to handle risks. Yes, if I return to Trier and discreetly wield my Doctor powers, I’ll undoubtedly attain middle-class status. It’s not inconceivable to ascend to high society, but I fear that garnering too much fame will draw the attention of official Beyonders. Trier isn’t as lenient as Port Santa, which is more accommodating to wild Beyonders.

“Furthermore, those dangerous Beyonders are always lurking around us. I refuse to be defenseless the next time I’m targeted.”

“If you refrain from participating in mysticism gatherings and solely run a clinic as a doctor, you wouldn’t be entangled in dangerous affairs. You could easily handle ordinary thieves and bandits,” Lumian countered nonchalantly.

Lugano shook his head.

“The Beyonder who left me his relics, enabling me to become a Planter, once warned me that once I enter the mysticism world, escape is impossible. Beyonder incidents will always surround us. If I’m fortunate, I might survive until natural death, but if I’m unlucky, I’ll end up like him.

“At first, I didn’t fully believe it, but the events of the past six months have increasingly convinced me of its truth. I did nothing, yet Rue Anarchie collapsed, and a peculiar tree sprouted. Before you hired me, I dreamed of becoming a figure in a painting, unable to return to reality. Upon waking up, I found myself wanted. This time, all I did was care for Ludwig, staying clear of any involvement, yet I was still senselessly attacked…”

Mm… Lumian’s expression grew more peculiar as he listened.

I seem to be the common denominator in all your tales…

Yet, you persist in following me…

Is this another instance of Beyonders encountering mysticism incidents? You didn’t encounter those incidents, but me…

Lugano continued,”I’ve also witnessed Beyonder powers like teleportation and tsunamis. Being just a Sequence 8 no longer satisfies me. I believe I’ll find more opportunities by following you.”

Lumian gazed at Lugano, unsure if someone had influenced him to insist on following or if Ludwig had somehow “tamed” him to be his “nanny.”

Initially, Lumian thought Lugano, as a Beyonder of the Planter pathway, had ties to the Church of Earth Mother. However, despite paying close attention, he hadn’t observed any additional communication between his guide and the Fertility Order or the Church of Earth Mother’s clergyman. Furthermore, Lugano seemed like a stranger.

Seeing Lumian stay silent, Lugano smiled ingratiatingly and proposed, “I have a gift for languages. I can self-learn Dutanese from the Southern Continent. As long as you pay me 300 verl d’or a month and promise me a share of the spoils, I can continue to be your guide, private doctor, child caregiver, and be half a fighter.”

“Sure.” Lumian handed over a total of 10,000 verl d’or. “This is the final 5,000 verl d’or from before. Additionally, you were attacked. As per our agreement, I’ll pay you an extra 5,000 verl d’or, making it a total of 10,000.”

Lugano gladly accepted the payment and began packing.

Lumian seized the moment to count his cash, confirming he still possessed 1,000 verl d’or in gold, 76,000 verl d’or in gold coins, along with other coins, banknotes, and the remaining 2,000 gold risot yet to be spent.

As long as he refrained from acquiring Beyonder characteristics, potion formulas, mystical items, or high-end mysticism knowledge, the money he carried could sustain him for a considerable time.

The following morning, Lumian boarded the ship bound for Feynapotter, adopting the guise of the adventurer Louis Berry. Approaching the first-class suite, he turned to Ludwig, posing a thoughtful question, “In your memories, or rather, Loki’s memories, are there any peculiar creatures? They resemble lizards but are quite small. They can crawl into a human’s mouth, appearing transparent and blurry, suspected to be Spirit Body. They have brownish-

green scales and dark-green eyes.”

This description deviated significantly from the Starlight Lizards transformed by the Children of the Sea.

Ludwig shook his head.

“No, it’s not in the Batings Black Insect’s memories either.”

Lumian fell silent, observing Lugano as he opened the suite door with the mannerisms of a servant.

Another hour passed, and amidst a whistle, the ship departed Port Santa.

After nearly two hours of sailing, the weather gradually worsened. The waves surged, and the strong winds compelled passengers on the deck to retreat to their cabins.

Observing the dusky sky, the dark clouds stirred by the wind, and the rising waves, many passengers, sailing for the first time, felt a sense of anxiety.

Noticing the confidence of the sailors beside them, they sought reassurance, “This is a common occurrence at sea. It’s not dangerous, right?”

A Port Santa native, working as a sailor, replied with a smile, “It’s relatively common, but it can be a bit dangerous. If the storm intensifies, we might need to seek shelter in a nearby port. But don’t worry. This year’s sea prayer ritual was a success. The current Governor of the Sea will protect us and prevent any shipwrecks!”

Governor of the Sea… The passengers became even more uneasy upon hearing the sailor’s response.

They had taken part in various sea prayer rituals and celebrations in Port Santa. While enjoyable, they didn’t truly believe that the Governor of the Sea could exert any significant influence on the waves.

Amidst their unease, they were astonished to find that the rising waves suddenly subsided.

Despite the dark clouds and strong winds, the seawater seemed to be pressed down by an invisible force, showing no noticeable fluctuations.

The Port Santa natives erupted in cheers.

“Long live the Governor! Praise the Governor of the Sea!”

Witnessing this, the passengers exchanged glances, momentarily speechless.

In the first-class suite, Lumian relaxed in a recliner, sipping undiluted Manzan. On his lap lay a Southern Continent Dutanese introductory textbook.

Clenching his right hand into a fist, he pulled it downward.

A section of the dark clouds in the sky descended, forming a formidable funnel.

Sunlight penetrated the massive hole, brightening the cabin and highlighting Lumian’s book.

Retracting his right hand, Lumian flipped through a page of the book. He found the Governor of the Sea’s abilities truly advantageous at sea.

Unfortunately, he could only use it for one more day.

…

Late at night in Trier, Angoulême returned to his residence and habitually switched on the radio transceiver.

Before long, a telegram arrived.

Upon seeing “Hidden Blade,” Angoulême frowned.

“Two bits of good news and a spot of bad news. Which one do you want first?

“I know. You must want to hear the good news first. I’ll get straight to it.

“The first piece of good news is that the humanoid Sealed Artifact has been located and secured. You don’t have to worry about the business trip to Feynapotter. You can focus on investigating the Mirror People matter in peace.

“The second piece of good news is that after communication, we’ve confirmed that the faction controlling the humanoid Sealed Artifact might return it to you. We’re willing to facilitate the matter, but you’ll need to provide all the information about the humanoid Sealed Artifact in exchange. Of course, it’s just a possibility, nothing set in stone. You won’t need to make a substantial payment until we reach an agreement.

“Bad news. Heh heh, there’s a traitor in your Church. The humanoid Sealed Artifact was lost because of a mole! We’re certain of this.

“Go, 007. Your chance to render meritorious service has arrived!”

After reading it in one go, Angoulême felt a sense of relief. This was because after the humanoid Sealed Artifact was lost, the Church’s upper echelons suspected a traitor and conducted an investigation, but to no avail. There was indeed an issue with the case leading to the loss of the humanoid Sealed Artifact, but the five Purifiers in charge of that case had been cleared of any wrongdoing during the investigation. They hadn’t performed well back then and had merely encountered an accident.

It seems that the mole has concealed himself well… Angoulême muttered to himself.

…

Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca sat by the bed and chatted in the telegram group, waiting for Jenna to return.

Her female companion would visit the Quartier de la Maison d’Opéra once a week to watch a theater performance and only return at midnight. However, the exact day she went was uncertain. Furthermore, she would disguise herself to prevent others from noticing her travel patterns.

Anthony, who lived nearby, had been busy infiltrating a circle of psychology enthusiasts, hoping to come into contact with a true Psychiatrist.

I seem to be the only one with time on my hands. I haven’t received any feedback about Mirror People… Franca wasn’t the kind of person who insisted on having something on her hands. She excelled in finding joy in life.

While Franca thought about Jenna, Jenna—who had just finished watching the last play—put on a hat with a black veil and stood up to leave the theater, where many spectators were still lingering.

At the exit, she patiently queued up and moved out.

Suddenly, Jenna sensed a slight tremor from one of the items on her.

Instinctively, she reached in and realized that it was the Mirror World Fragment from the Tamara family’s tomb.

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Chapter 600 - 600 Correct Reaction

600 Correct Reaction

Has something happened to the Mirror World Fragment? Jenna was taken aback for a moment before she tensed up.

This was unprecedented. The Mirror World Fragment had never exhibited such behavior before, leaving Jenna puzzled as to its sudden activity. Her mind raced, attempting to decipher its significance.

Could there be a disturbance in the special Mirror World itself?

Or perhaps someone in close proximity to me is closely involved with the special Mirror World?

Could this be a lead in Franca's Mirror People investigations?

Jenna's instincts urged her to scan her surroundings, searching for the source of the Mirror World Fragment's disturbance.

Jenna controlled herself just in time as a realization hit her: If this phenomenon was caused by someone closely tied to the special Mirror World, there was a high chance that the "sensation" was mutual. In simpler terms, while the fragment trembled slightly, there should be some anomaly on the person's body, detectable only by themselves. They, too, were searching for the source of the problem.

Under such circumstances, hastily surveying her surroundings might lead to discovery by the other party. A thunderous strike might follow.

Maintaining her composure, Jenna slowly moved out the door, her eyes fixed on the road ahead.

During this process, like many spectators, she turned her head slightly and glanced at the wall clock in the theater's foyer to confirm the time: 11:05 p.m.

After noting the time, Jenna returned to the foyer through the exit.

The spectators around her dispersed, and the place gradually became less crowded.

Jenna's Mirror World Fragment fell silent, no longer trembling abnormally.

Just now, there was no one in the foyer, and the Mirror World Fragment didn't tremble when I watched the theater performance… This means that for the abnormality to happen, both parties need to be close to each other, no more than

five meters apart, like when we were squeezing for the exit in the foyer. Now, is everything back to normal because the distance between them has widened again? Jenna's thoughts raced as she fully displayed her theatrical acting skills. Like ordinary spectators, she left the foyer and arrived on the street. She boarded a rental carriage belonging to the Imperial Carriage Company and paid 2.5 verl d'or in advance, her heart aching.

If the subway and public carriages were still running at this hour, she wouldn't have taken a rental carriage back to Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative from Quartier de la Maison d'Opéra.

…

Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai.

Jenna recounted her encounter to Franca and asked, "Did the Mirror World Fragment on you tremble slightly around 11:05?"

"No," Franca replied with unusual certainty.

Without waiting for Jenna to make a judgment, she smiled awkwardly and quickly added, "I don't think so. As you know, my Mirror World Fragment is stored in my Traveler's Bag. Even if there's a tremor, I can't sense it."

As Jenna couldn't help but roll her eyes, Franca tersely acknowledged and said,"Do you suspect that the abnormality in the special Mirror World caused a general change? If that's the case, even if the item is in the Traveler's Bag, I should be able to sense it spiritually. It's impossible to completely ignore it."

"Besides, when we put these two fragments together, there's never been a tremor. The probability of me encountering a Mirror People is very high. Or is it a member of a specific branch of the Tamara family?" Jenna said as she walked to the full-body mirror in the living room. She stroked the surface and whispered the secret subject she wanted to inquire about.

The full-body mirror's surface quickly darkened, surging with illusory water waves.

Jenna began Magic Mirror Divination.

"At approximately 23:05 last night, the area within a ten-meter radius of me…

"At approximately 23:05 last night, the area within a ten-meter radius of me…

"…"

After repeating it three times, the deep, dark mirror lit up.

In the light, Jenna saw herself in a bonnet, the theater exit connected to the theater foyer, and the audience and attendants standing within ten meters of her.

The spirit world faithfully recorded all this information.

The reflection in the mirror held a dynamic quality, not static or rigid. Jenna swiftly observed a woman standing a few meters ahead, abruptly turning to survey the people around her.

Donned in a black veiled hat, the lady, seemingly in her thirties, sported light eyebrows, bright yellowish eyes, and a white complexion from makeup. While not conventionally beautiful, she exuded elegance through her well-chosen attire.

Despite her refined appearance, the lady appeared to lose her composure, scanning the surroundings as if searching for a lost lover.

“There’s something off about her. She reacted to the Mirror World Fragment,” Franca remarked as she joined Jenna, analyzing the image in the full-body mirror. “But it’s been over an hour, and she hasn’t initiated any counter-divination. Is she careless or utterly unfamiliar with the process?”

Jenna nodded.

“Can you discern anything else?”

“Nothing more.” Franca suddenly slapped her forehead. “Gosh, we should’ve asked Anthony to take a look. A Spectator would surely glean more information.”

“You’re right…” Jenna was caught off guard.

They still weren’t used to seeking Anthony’s assistance.

Jenna suggested, “Let’s get Anthony tomorrow morning. Calling him over this late might lead to misunderstandings. Besides, it’s not an urgent matter.”

“Yes, he might get the wrong idea,” Franca quickly realized.

The next morning, after observing the scene through the Magic Mirror Divination, Anthony pondered and commented, “Her clothes were custom-

made, suggesting a well-off family background… Despite looking a bit lost after surveying the surroundings, she may lack knowledge about the Mirror World and its corresponding fragments. This contradicts her ability to make the Mirror World Fragment tremble. The answer often lies in the point of contradiction… Her walking style indicates good etiquette training, but her status at home isn’t particularly high.”

Franca couldn’t help but twitch her lips as she listened to the newly advanced Hypnotist dissect the target layer by layer. It felt like she had no secrets left from him.

Spectators are truly terrifying!

On the other hand, Jenna listened attentively, finding similarities with character analysis in drama acting class but more concrete and detailed.

In a daze, she felt transported back to Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, listening to her teacher's lecture.

"These characteristics won't help us locate her directly. They can only offer certain clues," Anthony concluded.

"Understood. Character profiling," Franca replied in a professional tone.

Anthony took out a piece of paper, picked up a pencil, and began sketching based on his impressions, intending to track her through various channels.

Casually, Franca asked, "How did you deduce that the lady's clothes were custom-made?"

Having once been a man and transformed into a woman with a potion, she remained fixated on the beauty of clothing and dresses. She didn't care about the store or tailor.

Jenna couldn't tell either, as before becoming a Witch, she hadn't reached the level to customize her clothes.

Anthony looked up at the two Demonesses.

"After becoming a Spectator, especially as an information broker, I've deliberately honed my observation skills. I recognize the materials and characteristics of most of Trier's ready-to-wear shops and the styles of many famous tailors. The lady's dress clearly doesn't come from any ready-to-wear shops."

Franca and Jenna revealed somewhat embarrassed expressions. Fortunately, Anthony was engrossed in his sketch and hadn't noticed their reactions.

…

Port Santa.

Nolfi, clad in a blouse and a light-colored jacket, escorted Batna to the dock.

Batna, sporting a half top hat, adjusted his rapier and cautiously inquired, "Are you really planning to stay here?"

Nolfi calmly responded, "I'm already a combat nun of the Fertility Order.

"It's just now dawning on me that the sea prayer ritual isn't about gaining power and making a pact with an evil god. It's about protection. It's an act of self-sacrifice.

“In the past, members of the Fisheries Guild used their influence and wealth to entice others into becoming the Governor of the Sea and Maidens of the Sea. Now, they’ve pledged to the Earth Mother’s Church and the Fertility Order. Going forward, they’ll inform potential candidates of the possible challenges and consequences beforehand, allowing them to make their own choices. I want to stay here and oversee this.”

“That’s good too.” Batna sighed. “Unfortunately, my destiny lies in sea adventures, and I can’t remain in one place.”

The lovely and endearing Nolfi nodded.

“I understand.”

She asked sincerely, “Do you wish to have a child here?”

“No, n-never mind,” Batna stammered. “I’m not mentally prepared to be someone else’s father.”

He didn’t want his child to turn into a humanoid lizard in the future.

Nolfi expressed regretfully, “Alright.”

Waving her hand, she turned around and walked away from the dock.

After a few steps, she abruptly turned back, revealing a bright and beautiful smile.

“Regardless, I’m grateful that you could accompany me out to sea.”

Without waiting for Batna’s response, Nolfi redirected her gaze and hastened her pace, leaving the dock.

Batna stood there, Nolfi’s final smile lingering in his mind. Her words of joy echoed in his ears, and he suddenly felt a sense of loss.

After Nolfi’s figure vanished from the dock, the adventurer slowly boarded the ship returning to Port Farim.

…

In the evening, inside the ship’s bar, Lumian raised a glass of amber sugar wine and addressed the patrons at the bar counter, “Ladies and gentlemen, I’m actually a magician. I can showcase an illusionary magic trick for you right now.”

He gestured towards the window.

“Look outside.”

Instinctively, the patrons glanced out the window and noticed that the surrounding waves had surged to a height of more than ten meters at some point, resembling a

mountain.

Just as they blinked, the terror-inspiring scene disappeared once again.

Clap! Clap! Clap! The patrons applauded Lumian’s brilliant magic trick.

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